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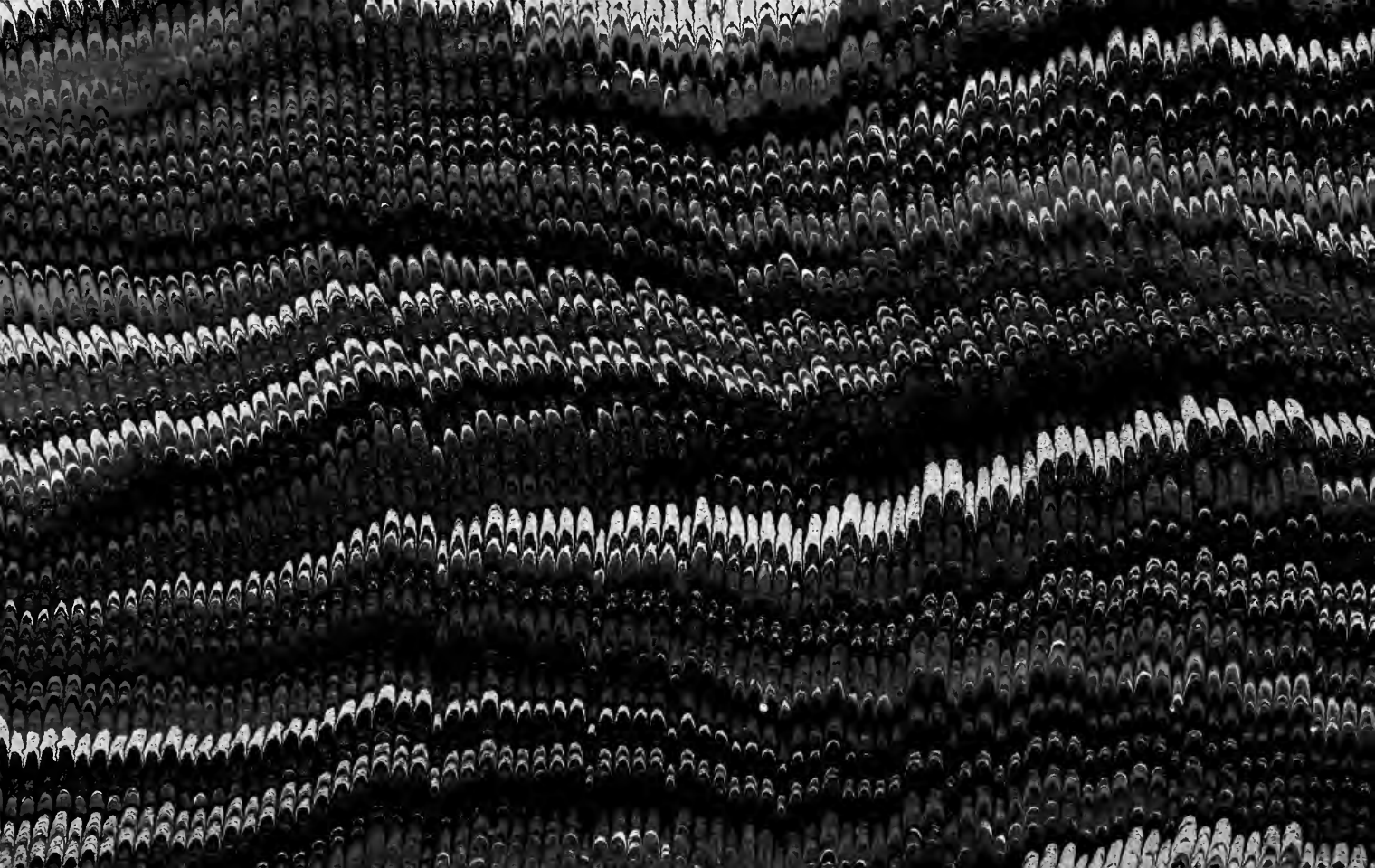

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WORKS

OF

CHARLES DICKENS.

HOUSEHOLD EDITION.

ILLUSTRATED FROM DRAWINGS BY F. O. C. DARLEY AND JOHN GILBERT.

THE OLD CURIOSITY SHOP;

AND REPRINTED PIECES.

VOL. III.

NEW YORK:
SHELDON AND COMPANY.
335 BROADWAY, COR. WORTH ST.
1863.

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1861, by

JAMES G. GREGORY,

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THE

OLD CURIOSITY SHOP.

CHAPTER LVI.

A DAY or two after the Quilp tea-party at the Wilderness, Mr. Swiveller walked into Sampson Brass's office at the usual hour, and being alone in that Temple of Probity, placed his hat upon the desk, and taking from his pocket a small parcel of black crape, applied himself to folding and pinning the same upon it, after the manner of a hat-band. Having completed the construction of this appendage, he surveyed his work with great complacency, and put his hat on again — very much over one eye to increase the mournfulness of the effect. These arrangements perfected to his entire satisfaction, he thrust his hands into his pockets, and walked up and down the office with measured steps.

"It has always been the same with me," said Mr. Swiveller, "always. 'Twas ever thus, from childhood's hour I've seen my fondest hopes decay, I never loved a tree or flower but 'twas the first to fade away; I never nursed a dear gazelle, to glad me with its soft black eye, but when it came to know me well, and love me, it was sure to marry a market-gardener."

Overpowered by these reflections, Mr. Swiveller stopped short at the clients' chair, and flung himself into its open arms.

"And this," said Mr. Swiveller, with a kind of bantering composure, "is life, I believe. Oh, certainly. Why not! I'm quite satisfied. I shall wear," added Richard, taking off his hat again and looking hard at it, as if he were only deterred by pecuniary considerations from spurning it with his foot, "I shall wear this emblem of woman's perfidy, in remembrance of her with whom I shall never again thread the windings of the mazy; whom I shall never more pledge in the rosy; who, during the short remainder of my existence, will murder the balmy. Ha, ha, ha!"

It may be necessary to observe, lest there should appear any incongruity in the close of this soliloquy, that Mr. Swiveller did not wind up with a cheerful hilarious laugh, which would have been undoubtedly at variance with his solemn reflections, but that, being in a theatrical mood, he merely achieved that performance which is designated in melodramas "laughing like a fiend," — for it seems that your fiends always laugh in syllables, and always in three syllables, never more nor less, which is a remarkable property in such gentry, and one worthy of remembrance.

The baleful sounds had hardly died away, and Mr. Swiveller was still sitting in a very grim state in the clients' chair, when there came a ring — or, if we may adapt the sound to his then humor, a knell — at the office bell. Opening the door with all speed, he beheld the expressive countenance of Mr. Chuckster, between whom and himself a fraternal greeting ensued.

"You're devilish early at this pestiferous old slaugh-

ter-house," said that gentleman, poising himself on one leg, and shaking the other in an easy manner.

"Rather," returned Dick.

"Rather!" retorted Mr. Chuckster, with an air of graceful trifling which so well became him. "*I* should think so. Why, my good feller, do you know what o'clock it is — half-past nine A. M. in the morning?"

"Won't you come in?" said Dick. "All alone. Swiveller solus. 'Tis now the witching'"—

"'Hour of night!'"

"'When church-yards yawn,'"

"'And graves give up their dead.'"

At the end of this quotation in dialogue, each gentleman struck an attitude, and immediately subsiding into prose, walked into the office. Such morsels of enthusiasm were common among the Glorious Apollos, and were indeed the links that bound them together, and raised them above the cold dull earth.

"Well, and how are you my buck?" said Mr. Chuckster, taking a stool. "I was forced to come into the city upon some little private matters of my own, and couldn't pass the corner of the street without looking in, but upon my soul I didn't expect to find you. It is so everlastingly early."

Mr. Swiveller expressed his acknowledgments; and it appearing on further conversation that he was in good health, and that Mr. Chuckster was in the like enviable condition, both gentlemen, in compliance with a solemn custom of the ancient Brotherhood to which they belonged, joined in a fragment of the popular duet of "All's Well," with a long shake at the end.

"And what's the news?" said Richard.

"The town's as flat, my dear feller," replied Mr.

Chuckster, "as the surface of a Dutch oven. There's no news. By-the-by, that lodger of yours is a most extraordinary person. He quite eludes the most vigorous comprehension, you know. Never was such a feller!"

"What has he been doing now?" said Dick.

"By Jove, sir," returned Mr. Chuckster, taking out an oblong snuff-box, the lid whereof was ornamented with a fox's head curiously carved in brass, "that man is an unfathomable. Sir, that man has made friends with our articled clerk. There's no harm in him, but he is so amazingly slow and soft. Now, if he wanted a friend, why couldn't he have one that knew a thing or two, and could do him some good by his manners and conversation. I have my faults, sir," said Mr. Chuckster. —

"No, no," interposed Mr. Swiveller.

"Oh yes I have, I have my faults, no man knows his faults better than I know mine. But," said Mr. Chuckster, "I'm not meek. My worst enemies — every man has his enemies, sir, and I have mine — never accused me of being meek. And I tell you what, sir, if I hadn't more of these qualities that commonly endear man to man, than our articled clerk has, I'd steal a Cheshire cheese, tie it round my neck, and drown myself. I'd die degraded, as I had lived. I would upon my honor."

Mr. Chuckster paused, rapped the fox's head exactly on the nose with the knuckle of the forefinger, took a pinch of snuff, and looked steadily at Mr. Swiveller, as much as to say that if he thought he was going to sneeze, he would find himself mistaken.

"Not contented, sir," said Mr. Chuckster, "with making friends with Abel, he has cultivated the acquaint-

ance of his father and mother. Since he came home from that wild-goose chase, he has been there — actually been there. He patronizes young Snobby besides; you'll find, sir, that he'll be constantly coming backwards and forwards to this place: yet I don't suppose that beyond the common forms of civility, he has ever exchanged half a dozen words with *me*. Now, upon my soul, you know," said Mr. Chuckster, shaking his head gravely, as men are wont to do when they consider things are going a little too far, "this is altogether such a low-minded affair, that if I didn't feel for the governor, and know that he could never get on without me, I should be obliged to cut the connection. I should have no alternative."

Mr. Swiveller, who sat on another stool opposite to his friend, stirred the fire in an excess of sympathy, but said nothing.

"As to young Snob, sir," pursued Mr. Chuckster with a prophetic look, "you'll find he'll turn out bad. In our profession we know something of human nature, and take my word for it, that the feller that came back to work out that shilling, will show himself one of these days in his true colors. He's a low thief, sir. He must be."

Mr. Chuckster being roused, would probably have pursued this subject further, and in more emphatic language, but for a tap at the door, which seeming to announce the arrival of somebody on business, caused him to assume a greater appearance of meekness than was perhaps quite consistent with his late declaration. Mr. Swiveller, hearing the same sound, caused his stool to revolve rapidly on one leg until it brought him to his desk, into which, having forgotten in the sudden flurry

of his spirits to part with the poker, he thrust it as he cried "Come in!"

Who should present himself but that very Kit who had been the theme of Mr. Chuckster's wrath! Never did man pluck up his courage so quickly, or look so fierce, as Mr. Chuckster when he found it was he. Mr. Swiveller stared at him for a moment, and then leaping from his stool, and drawing out the poker from its place of concealment, performed the broadsword exercise with all the cuts and guards complete, in a species of frenzy.

"Is the gentleman at home?" said Kit, rather astonished by this uncommon reception.

Before Mr. Swiveller could make any reply, Mr. Chuckster took occasion to enter his indignant protest against this form of inquiry; which he held to be of a disrespectful and snobbish tendency, inasmuch as the inquirer, seeing two gentlemen then and there present, should have spoken of the other gentleman; or rather (for it was not impossible that the object of his search might be of inferior quality) should have mentioned his name, leaving it to his hearers to determine his degree as they thought proper. Mr. Chuckster likewise remarked, that he had some reason to believe this form of address was personal to himself, and that he was not a man to be trifled with — as certain snobs (whom he did not more particularly mention or describe) might find to their cost.

"I mean the gentleman up-stairs," said Kit, turning to Richard Swiveller. "Is he at home?"

"Why?" rejoined Dick.

"Because if he is, I have a letter for him."

"From whom?" said Dick.

"From Mr. Garland."

"Oh!" said Dick, with extreme politeness. "Then

you may hand it over, sir. And if you're to wait for an answer, sir, you may wait in the passage, sir, which is an airy and well-ventilated apartment, sir."

"Thank you," returned Kit. "But I am to give it to himself, if you please."

The excessive audacity of this retort so overpowered Mr. Chuckster, and so moved his tender regard for his friend's honor, that he declared, if he were not restrained by official considerations, he must certainly have annihilated Kit upon the spot; a resentment of the affront which he did consider, under the extraordinary circumstances of aggravation attending it, could not but have met with the proper sanction and approval of a jury of Englishmen, who, he had no doubt, would have returned a verdict of Justifiable Homicide, coupled with a high testimony to the morals and character of the Avenger. Mr. Swiveller, without being quite so hot upon the matter, was rather shamed by his friend's excitement, and not a little puzzled how to act (Kit being quite cool and good humored), when the single gentleman was heard to call violently down the stairs.

"Didn't I see somebody for me, come in?" cried the lodger.

"Yes, sir," replied Dick. "Certainly, sir."

"Then where is he?" roared the single gentleman.

"He's here, sir," rejoined Mr. Swiveller. "Now young man, don't you hear you're to go up-stairs? Are you deaf?"

Kit did not appear to think it worth his while to enter into any altercation, but hurried off and left the Glorious Apollos gazing at each other in silence.

"Didn't I tell you so?" said Mr. Chuckster. "What do you think of that?"

Mr. Swiveller being in the main a good-natured fellow, and not perceiving in the conduct of Kit any villany of enormous magnitude, scarcely knew what answer to return. He was relieved from his perplexity, however, by the entrance of Mr. Sampson and his sister, Sally, at sight of whom Mr. Chuckster precipitately retired.

Mr. Brass and his lovely companion appeared to have been holding a consultation over their temperate breakfast, upon some matter of great interest and importance. On the occasion of such conferences, they generally appeared in the office some half an hour after their usual time, and in a very smiling state, as though their late plots and designs had tranquillized their minds and shed a light upon their toilsome way. In the present instance, they seemed particularly gay; Miss Sally's aspect being of a most oily kind, and Mr. Brass rubbing his hands in an exceedingly jocose and light-hearted manner.

"Well, Mr. Richard," said Brass. "How are we this morning? Are we pretty fresh and cheerful sir — eh, Mr. Richard?"

"Pretty well sir," replied Dick.

"That's well," said Brass. "Ha, ha! We should be as gay as larks Mr. Richard — why not? It's a pleasant world we live in sir, a very pleasant world. There are bad people in it Mr. Richard; but if there were no bad people, there would be no good lawyers. Ha, ha! Any letters by the post this morning, Mr. Richard?"

Mr. Swiveller answered in the negative.

"Ha!" said Brass, "no matter. If there's little business to-day, there'll be more to-morrow. A contented spirit, Mr. Richard, is the sweetness of existence. Anybody been here, sir?"

"Only my friend" — replied Dick. "'May we ne'er want a'" —

"'Friend,'" Brass chimed in quickly, "'or a bottle to give him.' Ha, ha! That's the way the song runs, isn't it? A very good song, Mr. Richard, very good. I like the sentiment of it. Ha, ha! Your friend's the young man from Witherden's office I think — yes — 'May we ne'er want a' — Nobody else at all, been, Mr. Richard?"

"Only somebody to the lodger," replied Mr. Swiveller.

"Oh indeed!" cried Brass. "Somebody to the lodger, eh? Ha, ha! 'May we ne'er want a friend, or a' — Somebody to the lodger, eh Mr. Richard?"

"Yes," said Dick, a little disconcerted by the excessive buoyancy of spirits which his employer displayed. "With him now."

"With him now!" cried Brass; "Ha, ha! There let 'em be, merry and free, toor rul lol le. Eh, Mr. Richard? Ha, ha!"

"Oh certainly," replied Dick.

"And who," said Brass, shuffling among his papers, "who is the lodger's visitor — not a lady visitor I hope, eh Mr. Richard? The morals of the Marks you know sir — 'when lovely woman stoops to folly' — and all that — eh Mr. Richard?"

"Another young man, who belongs to Witherden's too, or half belongs there," returned Richard. "Kit, they call him."

"Kit, eh!" said Brass. "Strange name — name of a dancing-master's fiddle, eh Mr. Richard? Ha, ha! Kit's there, is he? Oh!"

Dick looked at Miss Sally, wondering that she didn't

check this uncommon exuberance on the part of Mr. Sampson; but as she made no attempt to do so, and rather appeared to exhibit a tacit acquiescence in it, he concluded that they had just been cheating somebody, and receiving the bill.

"Will you have the goodness, Mr. Richard," said Brass, taking a letter from his desk, "just to step over to Peckham Rye with that? There's no answer, but it's rather particular and should go by hand. Charge the office with your coach-hire back, you know; don't spare the office; get as much out of it as you can — clerk's motto — Eh Mr. Richard? Ha, ha!"

Mr. Swiveller solemnly doffed the aquatic jacket, put on his coat, took down his hat from its peg, pocketed the letter, and departed. As soon as he was gone, uprose Miss Sally Brass, and smiling sweetly at her brother (who nodded and smote his nose in return) withdrew also.

Sampson Brass was no sooner left alone, than he set the office-door wide open, and establishing himself at his desk directly opposite, so that he could not fail to see anybody who came down-stairs and passed out at the street-door, began to write with extreme cheerfulness and assiduity; humming as he did so, in a voice that was anything but musical, certain vocal snatches which appeared to have reference to the union between Church and State, inasmuch as they were compounded of the Evening Hymn and God save the King.

Thus, the attorney of Bevis Marks sat, and wrote, and hummed, for a long time, except when he stopped to listen with a very cunning face, and hearing nothing, went on humming louder, and writing slower than ever. At length, in one of these pauses, he heard his

lodger's door opened and shut, and footsteps coming down the stairs. Then, Mr. Brass left off writing entirely, and, with his pen in his hand, hummed his very loudest; shaking his head meanwhile from side to side, like a man whose whole soul was in the music, and smiling in a manner quite seraphic.

It was towards this moving spectacle that the staircase and the sweet sounds guided Kit: on whose arrival before his door, Mr. Brass stopped his singing, but not his smiling, and nodded affably: at the same time beckoning to him with his pen.

"Kit," said Mr. Brass, in the pleasantest way imaginable, "how do you do?"

Kit, being rather shy of his friend, made a suitable reply, and had his hand upon the lock of the street door when Mr. Brass called him softly back.

"You are not to go, if you please, Kit," said the attorney in a mysterious and yet business-like way. "You are to step in here, if you please. Dear me, dear me! When I look at you," said the lawyer, quitting his stool, and standing before the fire with his back towards it, "I am reminded of the sweetest little face that ever my eyes beheld. I remember your coming there, twice or thrice, when we were in possession. Ah Kit, my dear fellow, gentlemen in my profession have such painful duties to perform sometimes, that you needn't envy us — you needn't indeed!"

"I don't sir," said Kit, "though it isn't for the like of me to judge."

"Our only consolation, Kit," pursued the lawyer, looking at him in a sort of pensive abstraction, "is, that although we cannot turn away the wind, we can soften it; we can temper it, if I may say so, to the shorn lambs."

"Shorn indeed!" thought Kit. "Pretty close!" But he didn't say so.

"On that occasion, Kit," said Mr. Brass, "on that occasion that I have just alluded to, I had a hard battle with Mr. Quilp (for Mr. Quilp is a very hard man) to obtain them the indulgence they had. It might have cost me a client. But suffering virtue inspired me, and I prevailed."

"He's not so bad after all," thought honest Kit, as the attorney pursed up his lips and looked like a man who was struggling with his better feelings.

"I respect *you*, Kit," said Brass with emotion. "I saw enough of your conduct, at that time, to respect you, though your station is humble, and your fortune lowly. It isn't the waistcoat that I look at. It is the heart. The checks in the waistcoat are but the wires of the cage. But the heart is the bird. Ah! How many sich birds are perpetually moulting, and putting their beaks through the wires to peck at all mankind!"

This poetic figure, which Kit took to be in special allusion to his own checked waistcoat, quite overcame him; Mr. Brass's voice and manner added not a little to its effect, for he discoursed with all the mild austerity of a hermit, and wanted but a cord round the waist of his rusty surtout, and a skull on the chimney-piece, to be completely set up in that line of business.

"Well, well," said Sampson, smiling as good men smile when they compassionate their own weakness or that of their fellow-creatures, "this is wide of the bull's-eye. You're to take that, if you please." As he spoke, he pointed to a couple of half-crowns on the desk.

Kit looked at the coins, and then at Sampson, and hesitated.

"For yourself," said Brass.

"From" ——

"No matter about the person they came from," replied the lawyer. "Say me, if you like. We have eccentric friends overhead, Kit, and we mustn't ask questions or talk too much — you understand? You're to take them, that's all; and between you and me, I don't think they'll be the last you'll have to take from the same place. I hope not. Good-by, Kit. Good-by!"

With many thanks, and many more self-reproaches for having on such slight grounds suspected one who in their very first conversation turned out such a different man from what he had supposed, Kit took the money and made the best of his way home. Mr. Brass remained airing himself at the fire, and resumed his vocal exercise, and his seraphic smile simultaneously.

"May I come in?" said Miss Sally, peeping.

"Oh yes, you may come in," returned her brother.

"Ahem?" coughed Miss Brass interrogatively.

"Why, yes," returned Sampson, "I should say as good as done."

CHAPTER LVII.

Mr. Chuckster's indignant apprehensions were not without foundation. Certainly the friendship between the single gentleman and Mr. Garland was not suffered to cool, but had a rapid growth and flourished exceedingly. They were soon in habits of constant intercourse and communication; and the single gentleman laboring at this time under a slight attack of illness — the consequence most probably of his late excited feelings and subsequent disappointment — furnished a reason for their holding yet more frequent correspondence; so, that some one of the inmates of Abel Cottage, Finchley, came backwards and forwards between that place and Bevis Marks, almost every day.

As the pony had now thrown off all disguise, and without any mincing of the matter or beating about the bush, sturdily refused to be driven by anybody but Kit, it generally happened that whether old Mr. Garland came, or Mr. Abel, Kit was of the party. Of all messages and inquiries, Kit was, in right of his position, the bearer; thus it came about that, while the single gentleman remained indisposed, Kit turned into Bevis Marks every morning with nearly as much regularity as the general postman.

Mr. Sampson Brass, who no doubt had his reasons for looking sharply about him, soon learnt to distinguish the

pony's trot and the clatter of the little chaise at the corner of the street. Whenever this sound reached his ears, he would immediately lay down his pen and fall to rubbing his hands and exhibiting the greatest glee.

"Ha, ha!" he would cry. "Here's the pony again! Most remarkable pony, extremely docile, eh, Mr. Richard, eh, sir?"

Dick would return some matter-of-course reply, and Mr. Brass, standing on the bottom rail of his stool, so as to get a view of the street over the top of the window-blind, would take an observation of the visitors.

"The old gentleman again!" he would exclaim, "a very prepossessing old gentleman, Mr. Richard — charming countenance, sir — extremely calm — benevolence in every feature, sir. He quite realizes my idea of King Lear, as he appeared when in possession of his kingdom, Mr. Richard — the same good-humor, the same white hair and partial baldness, the same liability to be imposed upon. Ah! A sweet subject for contemplation, sir, very sweet!"

Then, Mr. Garland having alighted and gone up-stairs, Sampson would nod and smile to Kit from the window, and presently walk out into the street to greet him, when some such conversation as the following would ensue.

"Admirably groomed, Kit" — Mr. Brass is patting the pony — "does you great credit — amazingly sleek and bright to be sure. He literally looks as if he had been varnished all over."

Kit touches his hat, smiles, pats the pony himself, and expresses his conviction, "that Mr. Brass will not find many like him."

"A beautiful animal indeed!" cries Brass. "Sagacious too?"

"Bless you!" replies Kit. "he knows what you say to him as well as a Christian does."

"Does he indeed!" cries Brass, who has heard the same thing in the same place from the same person in the same words a dozen times, but is paralyzed with astonishment notwithstanding, "Dear me!"

"I little thought the first time I saw him, sir," says Kit, pleased with the attorney's strong interest in his favorite, "that I should come to be as intimate with him as I am now."

"Ah!" rejoins Mr. Brass, brim-full of moral precepts and love of virtue. "A charming subject of reflection for you, very charming. A subject of proper pride and congratulation, Christopher. Honesty is the best policy. — I always find it so myself. I lost forty-seven pound ten by being honest this morning. But it's all gain, it's gain!"

Mr. Brass slyly tickles his nose with his pen, and looks at Kit with the water standing in his eyes. Kit thinks that if ever there was a good man who belied his appearance, that man is Sampson Brass.

"A man," says Sampson, "who loses forty-seven pound ten in one morning by his honesty, is a man to be envied. If it had been eighty pound, the luxuriousness of feeling would have been increased. Every pound lost, would have been a hundredweight of happiness gained. The still small voice, Christopher," cries Brass, smiling, and tapping himself on the bosom, "is a singing comic songs within me, and all is happiness and joy!"

Kit is so improved by the conversation, and finds it go so completely home to his feelings, that he is considering what he shall say, when Mr. Garland appears. The old gentleman is helped into the chaise with great obsequious-

ness by Mr. Sampson Brass; and the pony, after shaking his head several times, and standing for three or four minutes with all his four legs planted firmly on the ground, as if he had made up his mind never to stir from that spot, but there to live and die, suddenly darts off, without the smallest notice, at the rate of twelve English miles an hour. Then, Mr. Brass and his sister (who has joined him at the door) exchange an odd kind of smile — not at all a pleasant one in its expression — and return to the society of Mr. Richard Swiveller, who, during their absence, has been regaling himself with various feats of pantomime, and is discovered at his desk, in a very flushed and heated condition, violently scratching out nothing with half a penknife.

Whenever Kit came alone, and without the chaise, it always happened that Sampson Brass was reminded of some mission, calling Mr. Swiveller, if not to Peckham Rye again, at all events to some pretty distant place from which he could not be expected to return for two or three hours, or in all probability a much longer period, as that gentleman was not, to say the truth, renowned for using great expedition on such occasions, but rather for protracting and spinning out the time to the very utmost limit of possibility. Mr. Swiveller out of sight, Miss Sally immediately withdrew. Mr. Brass would then set the office-door wide open, hum his old tune with great gayety of heart, and smile seraphically as before. Kit coming down-stairs would be called in; entertained with some moral and agreeable conversation; perhaps entreated to mind the office for an instant while Mr. Brass stepped over the way; and afterwards presented with one or two half crowns as the case might be. This occurred so often, that Kit, nothing doubting but that

they came from the single gentleman who had already rewarded his mother with great liberality, could not enough admire his generosity; and bought so many cheap presents for her, and for little Jacob, and for the baby, and for Barbara to boot, that one or other of them was having some new trifle every day of their lives.

While these acts and deeds were in progress in and out of the office of Sampson Brass, Richard Swiveller, being often left alone therein, began to find the time hang heavy on his hands. For the better preservation of his cheerfulness, therefore, and to prevent his faculties from rusting, he provided himself with a cribbage-board and pack of cards, and accustomed himself to play at cribbage with a dummy, for twenty, thirty, or sometimes even fifty thousand pounds a side, besides many hazardous bets to a considerable amount.

As these games were very silently conducted, notwithstanding the magnitude of the interests involved, Mr. Swiveller began to think that on those evenings when Mr. and Miss Brass were out (and they often went out now) he heard a kind of snorting or hard-breathing sound in the direction of the door, which it occurred to him, after some reflection, must proceed from the small servant, who always had a cold from damp living. Looking intently that way one night, he plainly distinguished an eye gleaming and glistening at the key-hole; and having now no doubt that his suspicions were correct, he stole softly to the door, and pounced upon her before she was aware of his approach.

"Oh! I didn't mean any harm indeed, upon my word I didn't," cried the small servant, struggling like a much larger one. "It's so very dull, down-stairs. Please don't you tell upon me, please don't."

"Tell upon you!" said Dick. "Do you mean to say you were looking through the key-hole for company?"

"Yes, upon my word I was," replied the small servant.

"How long have you been cooling your eye there?" said Dick.

"Oh ever since you first began to play them cards, and long before."

Vague recollections of several fantastic exercises with which he had refreshed himself after the fatigues of business, and to all of which, no doubt, the small servant was a party, rather disconcerted Mr. Swiveller; but he was not very sensitive on such points, and recovered himself speedily.

"Well, — come in" — he said, after a little consideration. "Here — sit down, and I'll teach you how to play."

"Oh! I durstn't do it," rejoined the small servant; "Miss Sally 'ud kill me, if she know'd I come up here."

"Have you got a fire down-stairs?" said Dick.

"A very little one," replied the small servant.

"Miss Sally couldn't kill me if she know'd I went down there, so I'll come," said Richard, putting the cards into his pocket. "Why, how thin you are! What do you mean by it?"

"It a'n't my fault."

"Could you eat any bread and meat?" said Dick, taking down his hat. "Yes? Ah! I thought so. Did you ever taste beer?"

"I had a sip of it once," said the small servant.

"Here's a state of things!" cried Mr. Swiveller, raising his eyes to the ceiling. "She *never* tasted it — it can't be tasted in a sip! Why, how old are you?"

"I don't know."

Mr. Swiveller opened his eyes very wide, and appeared thoughtful for a moment; then, bidding the child mind the door until he came back, vanished straightway.

Presently, he returned, followed by the boy from the public-house, who bore in one hand a plate of bread and beef, and in the other a great pot, filled with some very fragrant compound, which sent forth a grateful steam, and was indeed choice purl, made after a particular recipe which Mr. Swiveller had imparted to the landlord, at a period when he was deep in his books and desirous to conciliate his friendship. Relieving the boy of his burden at the door, and charging his little companion to fasten it to prevent surprise, Mr. Swiveller followed her into the kitchen.

"There!" said Richard, putting the plate before her. "First of all, clear that off, and then you'll see what's next."

The small servant needed no second bidding, and the plate was soon empty.

"Next," said Dick, handing the purl, "take a pull at that; but moderate your transports, you know, for you're not used to it. Well, is it good?"

"Oh! isn't it?" said the small servant.

Mr. Swiveller appeared gratified beyond all expression by this reply, and took a long draught himself: steadfastly regarding his companion while he did so. These preliminaries disposed of, he applied himself to teaching her the game, which she soon learnt tolerably well, being both sharp-witted and cunning.

"Now," said Mr. Swiveller, putting two sixpences into a saucer, and trimming the wretched candle, when the cards had been cut and dealt, "those are the stakes. If

you win, you get 'em all. If I win, I get 'em. To make it seem more real and pleasant, I shall call you the Marchioness, do you hear?"

The small servant nodded.

"Then, Marchioness," said Mr. Swiveller, "fire away!"

The Marchioness, holding her cards very tight in both hands, considered which to play, and Mr. Swiveller, assuming the gay and fashionable air which such society required, took another pull at the tankard, and waited for her lead.

CHAPTER LVIII.

Mr. Swiveller and his partner played several rubbers with varying success, until the loss of three sixpences, the gradual sinking of the purl, and the striking of ten o'clock, combined to render that gentleman mindful of the flight of Time, and the expediency of withdrawing before Mr. Sampson and Miss Sally Brass returned.

"With which object in view, Marchioness," said Mr. Swiveller gravely, "I shall ask your ladyship's permission to put the board in my pocket, and to retire from the presence when I have finished this tankard; merely observing, Marchioness, that since life like a river is flowing, I care not how fast it rolls on, ma'am, on, while such purl on the bank still is growing, and such eyes light the waves as they run. Marchioness, your health. You will excuse my wearing my hat, but the palace is damp, and the marble floor, is — if I may be allowed the expression — sloppy."

As a precaution against this latter inconvenience, Mr. Swiveller had been sitting for some time with his feet on the hob, in which attitude he now gave utterance to these apologetic observations, and slowly sipped the last choice drops of nectar.

"The Baron Sampsono Brasso and his fair sister are (you tell me) at the Play?" said Mr. Swiveller, lean-

ing his left arm heavily upon the table, and raising his voice and his right leg after the manner of a theatrical bandit.

The Marchioness nodded.

"Ha!" said Mr. Swiveller, with a portentous frown. "'Tis well Marchioness!—but no matter. Some wine there. Ho!" He illustrated these melodramatic morsels, by handing the tankard to himself with great humility, receiving it haughtily, drinking from it thirstily, and smacking his lips fiercely.

The small servant who was not so well acquainted with theatrical conventionalities as Mr. Swiveller (having indeed never seen a play, or heard one spoken of, except by chance through chinks of doors and in other forbidden places) was rather alarmed by demonstrations so novel in their nature, and showed her concern so plainly in her looks, that Mr. Swiveller felt it necessary to discharge his brigand manner for one more suitable to private life, as he asked,—

"Do they often go where glory waits 'em and leave you here?"

"Oh, yes; I believe you they do," returned the small servant. "Miss Sally's such a one-er for that, she is."

"Such a what?" said Dick.

"Such a one-er," returned the Marchioness.

After a moment's reflection, Mr. Swiveller determined to forego his responsible duty of setting her right, and to suffer her to talk on; as it was evident that her tongue was loosened by the purl, and her opportunities for conversation were not so frequent as to render a momentary check of little consequence.

"They sometimes go to see Mr. Quilp," said the small

servant with a shrewd look; "they go to a many places, bless you!"

"Is Mr. Brass a wunner?" said Dick.

"Not half what Miss Sally is, he isn't," replied the small servant, shaking her head. "Bless you, he'd never do anything without her."

"Oh! He wouldn't, wouldn't he?" said Dick.

"Miss Sally keeps him in such order," said the small servant; "he always asks her advice, he does; and he catches it sometimes. Bless you, you wouldn't believe how much he catches it."

"I suppose," said Dick, "that they consult together, a good deal, and talk about a great many people—about me for instance, sometimes, eh, Marchioness?"

The Marchioness nodded amazingly.

"Complimentary?" said Mr. Swiveller.

The Marchioness changed the motion of her head, which had not yet left off nodding, and suddenly began to shake it from side to side, with a vehemence which threatened to dislocate her neck.

"Humph!" Dick muttered. "Would it be any breach of confidence, Marchioness, to relate what they say of the humble individual who has now the honor to?"—

"Miss Sally says you're a funny chap," replied his friend.

"Well, Marchioness," said Mr. Swiveller, "that's not uncomplimentary. Merriment, Marchioness, is not a bad or a degrading quality. Old King Cole was himself a merry old soul, if we may put any faith in the pages of history."

"But she says," pursued his companion, "that you a'n't to be trusted."

"Why, really Marchioness," said Mr. Swiveller, thoughtfully; "several ladies and gentlemen — not exactly professional persons, but tradespeople, ma'am, tradespeople — have made the same remark. The obscure citizen who keeps the hotel over the way, inclined strongly to that opinion to-night when I ordered him to prepare the banquet. It's a popular prejudice, Marchioness; and yet I am sure I don't know why, for I have been trusted in my time to a considerable amount, and I can safely say that I never forsook my trust until it deserted me — never. Mr. Brass is of the same opinion, I suppose!"

His friend nodded again, with a cunning look which seemed to hint that Mr. Brass held stronger opinions on the subject than his sister; and seeming to recollect herself, added imploringly, "But don't you ever tell upon me, or I shall be beat to death."

"Marchioness," said Mr. Swiveller, rising, "the word of a gentleman is as good as his bond — sometimes better, as in the present case, where his bond might prove but a doubtful sort of security. I am your friend, and I hope we shall play many more rubbers together in this same saloon. But, Marchioness," added Richard, stopping in his way to the door, and wheeling slowly round upon the small servant, who was following with the candle; "it occurs to me that you must be in the constant habit of airing your eye at key-holes, to know all this."

"I only wanted," replied the trembling Marchioness, "to know where the key of the safe was hid; that was all; and I wouldn't have taken much, if I had found it — only enough to squench my hunger."

"You didn't find it, then?" said Dick. "But of

course you didn't, or you'd be plumper. Good-night, Marchioness. Fare thee well, and if forever, then forever fare thee well — and put up the chain, Marchioness, in case of accidents."

With this parting injunction, Mr. Swiveller emerged from the house; and feeling that he had by this time taken quite as much to drink as promised to be good for his constitution (purl being a rather strong and heady compound), wisely resolved to betake himself to his lodgings, and to bed at once. Homeward he went therefore; and his apartments (for he still retained the plural fiction) being at no great distance from the office, he was soon seated in his own bedchamber, where, having pulled off one boot and forgotten the other, he fell into deep cogitation.

"This Marchioness," said Mr. Swiveller, folding his arms, "is a very extraordinary person — surrounded by mysteries, ignorant of the taste of beer, unacquainted with her own name (which is less remarkable), and taking a limited view of society through the key-holes of doors — can these things be her destiny, or has some unknown person started an opposition to the decrees of fate? It is a most inscrutable and unmitigated staggerer!"

When his meditations had attained this satisfactory point, he became aware of his remaining boot, of which, with unimpaired solemnity, he proceeded to divest himself; shaking his head with exceeding gravity all the time, and sighing deeply.

"These rubbers," said Mr. Swiveller, putting on his night-cap in exactly the same style as he wore his hat, "remind me of the matrimonial fireside. Cheggs's wife plays cribbage; all-fours likewise. She rings the

changes on 'em now. From sport to sport they hurry her, to banish her regrets, and when they win a smile from her, they think that she forgets — but she don't. By this time, I should say," added Richard, getting his left cheek into profile, and looking complacently at the reflection of a very little scrap of whisker in the looking-glass; "by this time, I should say, the iron has entered into her soul. It serves her right!"

Melting from this stern and obdurate, into the tender and pathetic mood, Mr. Swiveller groaned a little, walked wildly up and down, and even made a show of tearing his hair, which however he thought better of, and wrenched the tassel from his night-cap instead. At last, undressing himself with a gloomy resolution, he got into bed.

Some men in his blighted position would have taken to drinking; but as Mr. Swiveller had taken to that before, he only took, on receiving the news that Sophy Wackles was lost to him forever, to playing the flute; thinking after mature consideration that it was a good, sound, dismal occupation, not only in unison with his own sad thoughts, but calculated to awaken a fellow-feeling in the bosoms of his neighbors. In pursuance of this resolution, he now drew a little table to his bedside, and arranging the light and a small oblong music-book to the best advantage, took his flute from its box, and began to play most mournfully.

The air was, "Away with melancholy" — a composition, which, when it is played very slowly on the flute, in bed, with the further disadvantage of being performed by a gentleman but imperfectly acquainted with the instrument, who repeats one note a great many times, before he can find the next, has not a lively effect. Yet,

for half the night, or more, Mr. Swiveller, lying sometimes on his back with his eyes upon the ceiling, and sometimes half out of bed to correct himself by the book, played this unhappy tune over and over again; never leaving off, save for a minute or two at a time to take breath and soliloquize about the Marchioness, and then beginning again with renewed vigor. It was not until he had quite exhausted his several subjects of meditation, and had breathed into the flute the whole sentiment of the purl down to its very dregs, and had nearly maddened the people of the house, and at both the next doors, and over the way, — that he shut up the music-book, extinguished the candle, and finding himself greatly lightened and relieved in his mind, turned round and fell asleep.

He awoke in the morning, much refreshed; and having taken half an hour's exercise at the flute, and graciously received a notice to quit from his landlady, who had been in waiting on the stairs for that purpose since the dawn of day, repaired to Bevis Marks; where the beautiful Sally was already at her post, bearing in her looks a radiance, mild as that which beameth from the virgin moon.

Mr. Swiveller acknowledged her presence by a nod, and exchanged his coat for the aquatic jacket; which usually took some time fitting on, for in consequence of a tightness in the sleeves, it was only to be got into by a series of struggles. This difficulty overcome, he took his seat at the desk.

"I say" — quoth Miss Brass, abruptly breaking silence, "you haven't seen a silver pencil-case this morning, have you?"

"I didn't meet many in the street," rejoined Mr. Swiv-

eller. "I saw one — a stout pencil-case of respectable appearance — but as he was in company with an elderly penknife and a young toothpick with whom he was in earnest conversation, I felt a delicacy in speaking to him."

"No, but have you?" returned Miss Brass. "Seriously, you know."

"What a dull dog you must be to ask me such a question seriously," said Mr. Swiveller. "Haven't I this moment come?"

"Well, all I know is," replied Miss Sally, "that it's not to be found, and that it disappeared one day this week, when I left it on the desk."

"Halloa!" thought Richard, "I hope the Marchioness hasn't been at work here."

"There was a knife too," said Miss Sally, "of the same pattern. They were given to me by my father, years ago, and are both gone. You haven't missed anything yourself, have you?"

Mr. Swiveller involuntarily clapped his hands to the jacket to be quite sure that it *was* a jacket and not a skirted coat; and having satisfied himself of the safety of this, his only movable in Bevis Marks, made answer in the negative.

"It's a very unpleasant thing, Dick," said Miss Brass, pulling out the tin box and refreshing herself with a pinch of snuff; "but between you and me — between friends, you know, for if Sammy knew it, I should never hear the last of it — some of the office-money, too, that has been left about, has gone in the same way. In particular, I have missed three half-crowns at three different times."

"You don't mean that?" cried Dick. "Be careful

what you say, old boy, for this is a serious matter. Are you quite sure? Is there no mistake?"

"It is so, and there can't be any mistake at all," rejoined Miss Brass emphatically.

"Then by Jove," thought Richard, laying down his pen, "I am afraid the Marchioness is done for!"

The more he discussed the subject in his thoughts, the more probable it appeared to Dick that the miserable little servant was the culprit. When he considered on what a spare allowance of food she lived, how neglected and untaught she was, and how her natural cunning had been sharpened by necessity and privation, he scarcely doubted it. And yet he pitied her so much, and felt so unwilling to have a matter of such gravity disturbing the oddity of their acquaintance, that he thought, and thought truly, that rather than receive fifty pounds down, he would have the Marchioness proved innocent.

While he was plunged in very profound and serious meditation upon this theme, Miss Sally sat shaking her head with an air of great mystery and doubt; when the voice of her brother Sampson, carolling a cheerful strain, was heard in the passage, and that gentleman himself, beaming with virtuous smiles, appeared.

"Mr. Richard, sir, good-morning! Here we are again, sir, entering upon another day, with our bodies strengthened by slumber and breakfast, and our spirits fresh and flowing. Here we are, Mr. Richard, rising with the sun to run our little course — our course of duty, sir — and, like him, to get through our day's work with credit to ourselves and advantage to our fellow-creatures. A charming reflection, sir, very charming!"

While he addressed his clerk in these words, Mr. Brass was, somewhat ostentatiously, engaged in minutely

examining and holding up against the light a five-pound bank-note, which he had brought in, in his hand.

Mr. Richard not receiving his remarks with anything like enthusiasm, his employer turned his eyes to his face, and observed that it wore a troubled expression.

"You're out of spirits, sir," said Brass. "Mr. Richard, sir, we should fall to work cheerfully, and not in a despondent state. It becomes us, Mr. Richard, sir, to" ——

Here the chaste Sarah heaved a loud sigh.

"Dear me!" said Mr. Sampson, "you too! Is anything the matter? Mr. Richard, sir" ——

Dick, glancing at Miss Sally, saw that she was making signals to him, to acquaint her brother with the subject of their recent conversation. As his own position was not a very pleasant one until the matter was set at rest one way or other, he did so; and Miss Brass, plying her snuff-box at a most wasteful rate, corroborated his account.

The countenance of Sampson fell, and anxiety overspread his features. Instead of passionately bewailing the loss of his money, as Miss Sally had expected, he walked on tiptoe to the door, opened it, looked outside, shut it softly, returned on tiptoe, and said in a whisper, —

"This is a most extraordinary and painful circumstance — Mr. Richard, sir, a most painful circumstance. The fact is, that I myself have missed several small sums from the desk, of late, and have refrained from mentioning it, hoping that accident would discover the offender; but it has not done so — it has not done so. Sally — Mr. Richard, sir — this is a particularly distressing affair!"

As Sampson spoke, he laid the bank-note upon the desk among some papers, in an absent manner, and thrust his hands into his pockets. Richard Swiveller pointed to it, and admonished him to take it up.

"No, Mr. Richard, sir," rejoined Brass with emotion, "I will not take it up. I will let it lie there, sir. To take it up, Mr. Richard, sir, would imply a doubt of you; and in you, sir, I have unlimited confidence. We will let it lie there, sir, if you please, and we will not take it up by any means." With that, Mr. Brass patted him twice or thrice on the shoulder, in a most friendly manner, and entreated him to believe that he had as much faith in his honesty as he had in his own.

Although at another time Mr. Swiveller might have looked upon this as a doubtful compliment, he felt it, under the then existing circumstances, a great relief to be assured that he was not wrongfully suspected. When he had made a suitable reply, Mr. Brass wrung him by the hand, and fell into a brown study, as did Miss Sally likewise. Richard too remained in a thoughtful state; fearing every moment to hear the Marchioness impeached, and unable to resist the conviction that she must be guilty.

When they had severally remained in this condition for some minutes, Miss Sally all at once gave a loud rap upon the desk with her clenched fist, and cried, "I've hit it!" — as indeed she had, and chipped a piece out of it too; but that was not her meaning.

"Well," cried Brass, anxiously. "Go on, will you?"

"Why," replied his sister with an air of triumph, "hasn't there been somebody always coming in and out of this office for the last three or four weeks; hasn't that somebody been left alone in it sometimes — thanks

to you; and do you mean to tell me that that somebody isn't the thief!"

"What somebody?" blustered Brass.

"Why, what do you call him — Kit."

"Mr. Garland's young man?"

"To be sure."

"Never!" cried Brass. "Never. I'll not hear of it. Don't tell me" — said Sampson, shaking his head, and working with both his hands as if he were clearing away ten thousand cobwebs. "I'll never believe it of him. Never!"

"I say," repeated Miss Brass, taking another pinch of snuff, "that he's the thief."

"I say," returned Sampson violently, "that he is *not*. What do you mean? How dare you? Are characters to be whispered away like this? Do you know that he's the honestest and faithfullest fellow that ever lived, and that he has an irreproachable good name? Come in, come in!"

These last words were not addressed to Miss Sally, though they partook of the tone in which the indignant remonstrances that preceded them had been uttered. They were addressed to some person who had knocked at the office-door; and they had hardly passed the lips of Mr. Brass, when this very Kit himself looked in.

"Is the gentleman up-stairs sir, if you please?"

"Yes, Kit," said Brass, still fired with an honest indignation, and frowning with knotted brows upon his sister; "Yes Kit, he is. I am glad to see you Kit, I am rejoiced to see you. Look in again, as you come down-stairs, Kit. *That* lad a robber!" cried Brass when he had withdrawn, "with that frank and open countenance! I'd trust him with untold gold. Mr. Richard,

sir, have the goodness to step directly to Wrasp and Co.'s in Broad Street, and inquire if they have had instructions to appear in Carkem and Painter. *That* lad a robber," sneered Sampson, flushed and heated with his wrath. "Am I blind, deaf, silly; do I know nothing of human nature when I see it before me? Kit a robber! Bah!"

Flinging this final interjection at Miss Sally with immeasurable scorn and contempt, Sampson Brass thrust his head into his desk, as if to shut the base world from his view, and breathed defiance from under its half-closed lid.

CHAPTER LIX.

When Kit, having discharged his errand, came downstairs from the single gentleman's apartment after the lapse of a quarter of an hour or so, Mr. Sampson Brass was alone in the office. He was not singing as usual, nor was he seated at his desk. The open door showed him standing before the fire with his back towards it, and looking so very strange that Kit supposed he must have been suddenly taken ill.

"Is anything the matter sir?" said Kit.

"Matter!" cried Brass. "No. Why anything the matter?"

"Your are so very pale," said Kit, "that I should hardly have known you."

"Pooh, pooh! mere fancy," cried Brass, stooping to throw up the cinders. "Never better Kit, never better in all my life. Merry too. Ha, ha! How's our friend above-stairs, eh?"

"A great deal better," said Kit.

"I'm glad to hear it," rejoined Brass; "thankful, I may say. An excellent gentleman — worthy, liberal, generous, gives very little trouble — an admirable lodger. Ha, ha! Mr. Garland — he's well I hope, Kit — and the pony — my friend, my particular friend you know. Ha, ha!"

Kit gave a satisfactory account of all the little house-

hold at Abel Cottage. Mr. Brass, who seemed remarkably inattentive and impatient, mounted on his stool, and beckoning him to come nearer, took him by the button-hole.

"I have been thinking, Kit," said the lawyer, "that I could throw some little emoluments into your mother's way — You have a mother, I think? If I recollect right, you told me" —

"Oh yes, sir, yes certainly."

"A widow I think? an industrious widow?"

"A harder-working woman or a better mother never lived, sir."

"Ah!" cried Brass. "That's affecting, truly affecting. A poor widow struggling to maintain her orphans in decency and comfort, is a delicious picture of human goodness. — Put down your hat, Kit."

"Thank you, sir, I must be going directly."

"Put it down while you stay, at any rate," said Brass, taking it from him and making some confusion among the papers, in finding a place for it on the desk. "I was thinking, Kit, that we have often houses to let for people we are concerned for, and matters of that sort. Now you know we're obliged to put people into those houses to take care of 'em — very often undeserving people that we can't depend upon. What's to prevent our having a person that we *can* depend upon, and enjoying the delight of doing a good action at the same time? I say, what's to prevent our employing this worthy woman, your mother? What with one job and another, there's lodging — and good lodging too — pretty well all the year round, rent free, and a weekly allowance besides, Kit, that would provide her with a great many comforts she don't at present enjoy. Now

what do you think of that? Do you see any objection? My only desire is to serve you, Kit; therefore if you do, say so freely."

As Brass spoke, he moved the hat twice or thrice, and shuffled among the papers again, as if in search of something.

"How can I see any objection to such a kind offer, sir?" replied Kit with his whole heart. "I don't know how to thank you, sir, I don't indeed."

"Why then," said Brass, suddenly turning upon him and thrusting his face close to Kit's with such a repulsive smile that the latter, even in the very height of his gratitude, drew back, quite startled. "Why then, *it's done.*"

Kit looked at him in some confusion.

"Done, I say," added Sampson, rubbing his hands and veiling himself again in his usual oily manner. "Ha, ha! and so you shall find Kit, so you shall find. But dear me," said Brass, "what a time Mr. Richard is gone! A sad loiterer to be sure! Will you mind the office one minute, while I run up-stairs? Only one minute. I'll not detain you an instant longer, on any account, Kit."

Talking as he went, Mr. Brass bustled out of the office, and in a very short time returned. Mr. Swiveller came back, almost at the same instant; and as Kit was leaving the room hastily, to make up for lost time, Miss Brass herself encountered him in the doorway.

"Oh?" sneered Sally, looking after him as she entered. "There goes your pet, Sammy, eh?"

"Ah! There he goes," replied Brass. "My pet, if you please. An honest fellow, Mr. Richard, sir — a worthy fellow indeed!"

"Hem!" coughed Miss Brass.

"I tell you, you aggravating vagabond," said the angry Sampson, "that I'd stake my life upon his honesty. Am I never to hear the last of this? Am I always to be baited, and beset, by your mean suspicions? Have you no regard for true merit, you malignant fellow? If you come to that, I'd sooner suspect your honesty than his."

Miss Sally pulled out the tin snuff-box, and took a long, slow pinch: regarding her brother with a steady gaze all the time.

"She drives me wild, Mr. Richard, sir," said Brass, "she exasperates me beyond all bearing. I am heated and excited, sir, I know I am. These are not business manners, sir, nor business looks, but she carries me out of myself."

"Why don't you leave him alone?" said Dick.

"Because she can't, sir," retorted Brass; "because to chafe and vex me is a part of her nature, sir, and she will and must do it, or I don't believe she'd have her health. But never mind," said Brass, "never mind. I've carried my point. I've shown my confidence in the lad. He has minded the office again. Ha, ha! Ugh, you viper!"

The beautiful virgin took another pinch, and put the snuff-box in her pocket; still looking at her brother with perfect composure.

"He has minded the office again," said Brass triumphantly; "he has had my confidence, and he shall continue to have it; he — why, where's the" —

"What have you lost?" inquired Mr. Swiveller.

"Dear me!" said Brass, slapping all his pockets, one after another, and looking into his desk, and under it,

and upon it, and wildly tossing the papers about, "the note, Mr. Richard, sir, the five-pound note — what can have become of it? I laid it down here — God bless me!"

"What!" cried Miss Sally, starting up, clapping her hands, and scattering the papers on the floor. "Gone! Now who's right? Now who's got it? Never mind five pounds — what's five pounds? He's honest you know, quite honest. It would be mean to suspect *him*. Don't run after him. No, no, not for the world!"

"Is it really gone though?" said Dick, looking at Brass with a face as pale as his own.

"Upon my word, Mr. Richard sir," replied the lawyer, feeling in all his pockets with looks of the greatest agitation, "I fear this is a black business. It's certainly gone, sir. What's to be done?"

"Don't run after him," said Miss Sally, taking more snuff. "Don't run after him on any account. Give him time to get rid of it, you know. It would be cruel to find him out!"

Mr. Swiveller and Sampson Brass looked from Miss Sally to each other, in a state of bewilderment, and then, as by one impulse, caught up their hats and rushed out into the street — darting along in the middle of the road, and dashing aside all obstructions, as though they were running for their lives.

It happened that Kit had been running too, though not so fast, and having the start of them by some few minutes, was a good distance ahead. As they were pretty certain of the road he must have taken, however, and kept on at a great pace, they came up with him, at the very moment when he had taken breath, and was breaking into a run again.

"Stop!" cried Sampson, laying his hand on one shoulder, while Mr. Swiveller pounced upon the other. "Not so fast sir. You're in a hurry?"

"Yes, I am," said Kit, looking from one to the other in great surprise.

"I — I — can hardly believe it," panted Sampson, "but something of value is missing from the office. I hope you don't know what."

"Know what! good Heaven, Mr. Brass!" cried Kit, trembling from head to foot; "you don't suppose" —

"No, no," rejoined Brass quickly, "I don't suppose anything. Don't say *I* said you did. You'll come back quietly, I hope?"

"Of course I will," returned Kit. "Why not?"

"To be sure!" said Brass. "Why not? I hope there may turn out to be no why not. If you knew the trouble I've been in, this morning, through taking your part, Christopher, you'd be sorry for it."

"And I am sure you'll be sorry for having suspected me sir," replied Kit. "Come. Let us make haste back."

"Certainly!" cried Brass, "the quicker, the better. Mr. Richard — have the goodness sir to take that arm. I'll take this one. It's not easy walking three abreast, but under these circumstances it must be done sir; there's no help for it."

Kit did turn from white to red, and from red to white again, when they secured him thus, and for a moment seemed disposed to resist. But, quickly recollecting himself, and remembering that if he made any struggle, he would perhaps be dragged by the collar through the public streets, he only repeated, with great earnestness and with the tears standing in his eyes, that they

would be sorry for this — and suffered them to lead him off. While they were on the way back, Mr. Swiveller, upon whom his present functions sat very irksomely, took an opportunity of whispering in his ear that if he would confess his guilt, even by so much as a nod, and promise not to do so any more, he would connive at his kicking Sampson Brass on the shins and escaping up a court; but Kit indignantly rejecting this proposal, Mr. Richard had nothing for it, but to hold him tight until they reached Bevis Marks, and ushered him into the presence of the charming Sarah, who immediately took the precaution of locking the door.

"Now, you know," said Brass, "if this is a case of innocence, it is a case of that description, Christopher, where the fullest disclosure is the best satisfaction for everybody. Therefore if you'll consent to an examination," he demonstrated what kind of an examination he meant by turning back the cuffs of his coat, "it will be a comfortable and pleasant thing for all parties."

"Search me," said Kit, proudly holding up his arms. "But mind sir — I know you'll be sorry for this, to the last day of your life."

"It is certainly a very painful occurrence," said Brass with a sigh, as he dived into one of Kit's pockets, and fished up a miscellaneous collection of small articles; "very painful. Nothing here, Mr. Richard, sir, all perfectly satisfactory. Nor here, sir. Nor in the waistcoat, Mr. Richard, nor in the coat-tails. So far, I am rejoiced, I am sure."

Richard Swiveller, holding Kit's hat in his hand, was watching the proceedings with great interest, and bore upon his face the slightest possible indication of a smile,

as Brass, shutting one of his eyes, looked with the other up the inside of one of the poor fellow's sleeves as if it were a telescope — when Sampson turning hastily to him, bade him search the hat.

"Here's a handkerchief," said Dick.

"No harm in that sir," rejoined Brass, applying his eye to the other sleeve, and speaking in the voice of one who was contemplating an immense extent of prospect. "No harm in a handkerchief sir, whatever. The faculty don't consider it a healthy custom, I believe, Mr. Richard, to carry one's handkerchief in one's hat — I have heard that it keeps the head too warm — but in every other point of view, it's being there, is extremely satisfactory — ex-tremely so."

An exclamation, at once from Richard Swiveller, Miss Sally, and Kit himself, cut the lawyer short. He turned his head, and saw Dick standing with the bank-note in his hand.

"In the hat?" cried Brass, in a sort of shriek.

"Under the handkerchief, and tucked beneath the lining," said Dick, aghast at the discovery.

Mr. Brass looked at him, at his sister, at the walls, at the ceiling, at the floor — everywhere but at Kit, who stood quite stupefied and motionless.

"And this," cried Sampson, clasping his hands, "is the world that turns upon its own axis, and has lunar influences, and revolutions round heavenly bodies, and various games of that sort! This is human natur, is it! Oh natur, natur! This is the miscreant that I was going to benefit with all my little arts, and that, even now, I feel so much for, as to wish to let him go! But," added Mr. Brass with greater fortitude, "I am myself a lawyer, and bound to set an example in carrying the laws of my

happy country into effect. Sally my dear, forgive me, and catch hold of him on the other side. Mr. Richard sir, have the goodness to run and fetch a constable. The weakness is past and over sir, and moral strength returns. A constable, sir, if *you* please!"

CHAPTER LX.

KIT stood as one entranced, with his eyes opened wide and fixed upon the ground, regardless alike of the tremulous hold which Mr. Brass maintained on one side of his cravat, and of the firmer grasp of Miss Sally upon the other; although this latter detention was in itself no small inconvenience, as that fascinating woman, besides screwing her knuckles inconveniently into his throat from time to time, had fastened upon him in the first instance with so tight a grip that even in the disorder and distraction of his thoughts he could not divest himself of an uneasy sense of choking. Between the brother and sister he remained in this posture, quite unresisting and passive, until Mr. Swiveller returned, with a police constable at his heels.

This functionary, being, of course, well used to such scenes; looking upon all kinds of robbery, from petty larceny up to house-breaking or ventures on the highway, as matters in the regular course of business; and regarding the perpetrators in the light of so many customers coming to be served at the wholesale and retail shop of criminal law where he stood behind the counter; received Mr. Brass's statement of facts with about as much interest and surprise, as an undertaker might evince if required to listen to a circumstantial account of the last illness of a person whom he was called in to wait upon

professionally; and took Kit into custody with a decent indifference.

"We had better," said this subordinate minister of justice, "get to the office while there's a magistrate sitting. I shall want you to come along with us, Mr. Brass, and the" — he looked at Miss Sally as if in some doubt whether she might not be a griffin or other fabulous monster.

"The lady, eh?" said Sampson.

"Ah!" replied the constable. "Yes — the lady. Likewise the young man that found the property."

"Mr. Richard, sir," said Brass in a mournful voice. "A sad necessity. But the altar of our country, sir" —

"You'll have a hackney coach, I suppose?" interrupted the constable, holding Kit (whom his other captors had released) carelessly by the arm, a little above the elbow. "Be so good as send for one, will you?"

"But, hear me speak a word," cried Kit, raising his eyes and looking imploringly about him. "Hear me speak a word. I am no more guilty than any one of you. Upon my soul I am not. I, a thief! Oh, Mr. Brass, you know me better. I am sure you know me better. This is not right of you, indeed."

"I give you my word, constable" — said Brass. But here the constable interposed with the constitutional principle "words be blowed"; observing that words were but spoon-meat for babes and sucklings, and that oaths were the food for strong men.

"Quite true, constable," assented Brass in the same mournful tone. "Strictly correct. I give you my oath, constable, that down to a few minutes ago, when this fatal discovery was made, I had such confidence in that

lad, that I'd have trusted him with — a hackney-coach, Mr. Richard, sir; you're very slow, sir."

"Who is there that knows me," cried Kit, "that would not trust me — that does not? ask anybody whether they have ever doubted me; whether I have ever wronged them of a farthing. Was I ever once dishonest when I was poor and hungry, and is it likely I would begin now! Oh consider what you do. How can I meet the kindest friends that ever human creature had, with this dreadful charge upon me!"

Mr. Brass rejoined that it would have been well for the prisoner if he had thought of that before, and was about to make some other gloomy observations when the voice of the single gentleman was heard, demanding from above-stairs what was the matter, and what was the cause of all that noise and hurry. Kit made an involuntary start towards the door in his anxiety to answer for himself, but being speedily detained by the constable, had the agony of seeing Sampson Brass run out alone to tell the story in his own way.

"And he can hardly believe it, either," said Sampson, when he returned, "nor nobody will. I wish I could doubt the evidence of my senses, but their depositions are unimpeachable. It's of no use cross-examining my eyes," cried Sampson, winking and rubbing them, "they stick to their first account, and will. Now, Sarah, I hear the coach in the Marks; get on your bonnet, and we'll be off. A sad errand? a moral funeral, quite!"

"Mr. Brass," said Kit, "do me one favor. Take me to Mr. Witherden's first."

Sampson shook his head irresolutely.

"Do," said Kit. "My master's there. For Heaven's sake, take me there, first."

"Well, I don't know," stammered Brass, who perhaps had his reasons for wishing to show as fair as possible in the eyes of the notary. "How do we stand in point of time, constable, eh?"

The constable, who had been chewing a straw all this while with great philosophy, replied that if they went away at once they would have time enough, but that if they stood shilly-shallying there, any longer, they must go straight to the Mansion House; and finally expressed his opinion that that was where it was, and that was all about it.

Mr. Richard Swiveller having arrived inside the coach, and still remaining immovable in the most commodious corner with his face to the horses, Mr. Brass instructed the officer to remove his prisoner, and declared himself quite ready. Therefore, the constable, still holding Kit in the same manner, and pushing him on a little before him, so as to keep him at about three quarters of an arm's length in advance (which is the professional mode), thrust him into the vehicle and followed himself. Miss Sally entered next; and there being now four inside, Sampson Brass got upon the box, and made the coachman drive on.

Still completely stunned by the sudden and terrible change which had taken place in his affairs, Kit sat gazing out of the coach window, almost hoping to see some monstrous phenomenon in the streets which might give him reason to believe he was in a dream. Alas! Everything was too real and familiar: the same succession of turnings, the same houses, the same streams of people running side by side in different directions upon the pavement, the same bustle of carts and carriages in the road, the same well-remembered objects in the shop win-

dows: a regularity in the very noise and hurry which no dream ever mirrored. Dream-like as the story was, it was true. He stood charged with robbery; the note had been found upon him, though he was innocent in thought and deed; and they were carrying him back a prisoner.

Absorbed in these painful ruminations, thinking with a drooping heart of his mother and little Jacob, feeling as though even the consciousness of innocence would be insufficient to support him in the presence of his friends if they believed him guilty, and sinking in hope and courage more and more as they drew nearer to the notary's, poor Kit was looking earnestly out of the window, observant of nothing, — when all at once, as though it had been conjured up by magic, he became aware of the face of Quilp.

And what a leer there was upon the face! It was from the open window of a tavern that it looked out; and the dwarf had so spread himself over it, with his elbows on the window-sill and his head resting on both his hands, that what between this attitude and his being swoln with suppressed laughter he looked puffed and bloated into twice his usual breadth. Mr. Brass, on recognizing him, immediately stopped the coach. As it came to a halt directly opposite to where he stood, the dwarf pulled off his hat, and saluted the party with a hideous and grotesque politeness.

"Aha!" he cried. "Where now, Brass? where now? Sally with you too? Sweet Sally! And Dick? Pleasant Dick! And Kit? Honest Kit!"

"He's extremely cheerful!" said Brass to the coachman. "Very much so! Ah sir — a sad business! Never believe in honesty any more, sir."

"Why not?" returned the dwarf. "Why not, you rogue of a lawyer, why not?"

"Bank-note lost in our office, sir," said Brass, shaking his head. "Found in his hat, sir — he previously left alone there — no mistake at all, sir — chain of evidence complete — not a link wanting."

"What!" cried the dwarf, leaning half his body out of window, "Kit a thief! Kit a thief! Ha, ha, ha! Why, he's an uglier-looking thief than can be seen anywhere for a penny. Eh, Kit — eh? Ha, ha, ha! Have you taken Kit into custody before he had time and opportunity to beat me! Eh, Kit, eh?" And with that, he burst into a yell of laughter, manifestly to the great terror of the coachman, and pointed to a dyer's pole hard by, where a dangling suit of clothes bore some resemblance to a man upon a gibbet.

"Is it coming to that, Kit!" cried the dwarf, rubbing his hands violently. "Ha, ha, ha, ha! What a disappointment for little Jacob, and for his darling mother! Let him have the Bethel minister to comfort and console him, Brass. Eh, Kit, eh? Drive on coachey, drive on. Bye bye, Kit; all good go with you; keep up your spirits; my love to the Garlands — the dear old lady and gentleman. Say I inquired after 'em, will you? Blessings on 'em, and on you, and on everybody, Kit. Blessings on all the world!"

With such good wishes and farewells, poured out in a rapid torrent until they were out of hearing, Quilp suffered them to depart; and when he could see the coach no longer, drew in his head, and rolled upon the ground in an ecstasy of enjoyment.

When they reached the notary's, which they were not long in doing, for they had encountered the dwarf in a

by-street at a very little distance from the house, Mr. Brass dismounted; and opening the coach-door with a melancholy visage, requested his sister to accompany him into the office, with the view of preparing the good people within for the mournful intelligence that awaited them. Miss Sally complying, he desired Mr. Swiveller to accompany them. So, into the office they went; Mr. Sampson and his sister arm-in-arm; and Mr. Swiveller following, alone.

The notary was standing before the fire in the outer office, talking to Mr. Abel and the elder Mr. Garland, while Mr. Chuckster sat writing at the desk, picking up such crumbs of their conversation as happened to fall in his way. This posture of affairs Mr. Brass observed through the glass-door as he was turning the handle, and seeing that the notary recognized him, he began to shake his head and sigh deeply while that partition yet divided them.

"Sir," said Sampson, taking off his hat, and kissing the two forefingers of his right hand beaver glove, "my name is Brass — Brass of Bevis Marks, sir. I have had the honor and pleasure, sir, of being concerned against you in some little testamentary matters. How do you do, sir?"

"My clerk will attend to any business you may have come upon, Mr. Brass," said the notary, turning away.

"Thank you, sir," said Brass, "thank you, I am sure. Allow me, sir, to introduce my sister — quite one of us, sir, although of the weaker sex.— of great use in my business, sir, I assure you. Mr. Richard, sir, have the goodness to come forward if you please — No really," said Brass, stepping between the notary and his private office (towards which he had begun to retreat), and speak-

ing in the tone of an injured man, "really sir, I must, under favor, request a word or two with you, indeed."

"Mr. Brass," said the other, in a decided tone, "I am engaged. You see that I am occupied with these gentlemen. If you will communicate your business to Mr. Chuckster yonder, you will receive every attention."

"Gentlemen," said Brass, laying his right hand on his waistcoat, and looking towards the father and son with a smooth smile — "Gentlemen, I appeal to you — really, gentlemen — consider, I beg of you. I am of the law. I am styled 'gentleman' by act of Parliament. I maintain the title by the annual payment of twelve pounds sterling for a certificate. I am not one of your players of music, stage-actors, writers of books, or painters of pictures, who assume a station that the laws of their country don't recognize. I am none of your strollers or vagabonds. If any man brings his action against me, he must describe me as a gentleman, or his action is null and void. I appeal to you — is this quite respectful? Really, gentlemen" —

"Well, will you have the goodness to state your business, then, Mr. Brass?" said the notary.

"Sir," rejoined Brass, "I will. Ah, Mr. Witherden! you little know the — but I will not be tempted to travel from the point, sir. I believe the name of one of these gentlemen is Garland."

"Of both," said the notary.

"In-deed!" rejoined Brass, cringing excessively. "But I might have known that, from the uncommon likeness. Extremely happy, I am sure, to have the honor of an introduction to two such gentlemen, although the occasion is a most painful one. One of you gentlemen has a servant called Kit?"

"Both," replied the notary.

"Two Kits?" said Brass, smiling. "Dear me!"

"One Kit, sir," returned Mr. Witherden, angrily, "who is employed by both gentlemen. What of him?"

"This of him, sir," rejoined Brass, dropping his voice impressively. "That young man, sir, that I have felt unbounded and unlimited confidence in, and always behaved to as if he was my equal — that young man has this morning committed a robbery in my office, and been taken almost in the fact."

"This must be some falsehood!" cried the notary.

"It is not possible," said Mr. Abel.

"I'll not believe one word of it," exclaimed the old gentleman.

Mr. Brass looked mildly round upon them, and rejoined.

"Mr. Witherden, sir, *your* words are actionable, and if I was a man of low and mean standing, who couldn't afford to be slandered, I should proceed for damages. Hows'ever sir, being what I am, I merely scorn such expressions. The honest warmth of the other gentleman I respect, and I'm truly sorry to be the messenger of such unpleasant news. I shouldn't have put myself in this painful position, I assure you, but that the lad himself desired to be brought here in the first instance, and I yielded to his prayers. Mr. Chuckster sir, will you have the goodness to tap at the window for the constable that's waiting in the coach?"

The three gentlemen looked at each other with blank faces when these words were uttered, and Mr. Chuckster, doing as he was desired, and leaping off his stool with something of the excitement of an inspired prophet whose foretellings had in the fulness of time been real-

ized, held the door open for the entrance of the wretched captive.

Such a scene as there was, when Kit came in, and bursting into the rude eloquence with which Truth at length inspired him, called Heaven to witness that he was innocent, and that how the property came to be found upon him he knew not! Such a confusion of tongues, before the circumstances were related, and the proofs disclosed! Such a dead silence when all was told, and his three friends exchanged looks of doubt and amazement!

"Is it not possible," said Mr. Witherden, after a long pause, "that this note may have found its way into the hat by some accident, — such as the removal of papers on the desk, for instance?"

But, this was clearly shown to be quite impossible. Mr. Swiveller, though an unwilling witness, could not help proving to demonstration, from the position in which it was found, that it must have been designedly secreted.

"It's very distressing," said Brass, "immensely distressing, I am sure. When he comes to be tried, I shall be very happy to recommend him to mercy on account of his previous good character. I did lose money before certainly, but it doesn't quite follow that he took it. The presumption's against him — strongly against him — but we're Christians, I hope?"

"I suppose," said the constable, looking round, "that no gentleman here, can give evidence as to whether he's been flush of money of late. Do you happen to know sir?"

"He has had money from time to time, certainly," returned Mr. Garland, to whom the man had put the question. "But that, as he always told me, was given him by Mr. Brass himself."

"Yes to be sure," said Kit eagerly. "You can bear me out in that sir?"

"Eh?" cried Brass, looking from face to face with an expression of stupid amazement.

"The money you know, the half-crowns that you gave me — from the lodger," said Kit.

"Oh dear me!" cried Brass, shaking his head and frowning heavily. "This is a bad case, I find! a very bad case indeed."

"What! Did you give him no money on account of anybody, sir?" asked Mr. Garland, with great anxiety.

"*I* give him money, sir!" returned Sampson. "Oh, come you know, this is too barefaced. Constable, my good fellow, we had better be going."

"What!" shrieked Kit. "Does he deny that he did? ask him, somebody, pray. Ask him to tell you whether he did or not!"

"Did you, sir?" asked the notary.

"I tell you what, gentlemen," replied Brass, in a very grave manner, "he'll not serve his case this way, and really, if you feel any interest in him, you had better advise him to go upon some other tack. Did I, sir? Of course I never did."

"Gentlemen," cried Kit, on whom a light broke suddenly, "Master, Mr. Abel, Mr. Witherden, every one of you — he did it! What I have done to offend him, I don't know, but this is a plot to ruin me. Mind, gentlemen, it's a plot, and whatever comes of it, I will say with my dying breath that he put that note in my hat himself! Look at him, gentlemen! See how he changes color. Which of us looks the guilty person — he or I?"

"You hear him, gentlemen?" said Brass, smiling, "you hear him. Now, does this case strike you as as-

suming rather a black complexion, or does it not? Is it at all a treacherous case, do you think, or is it one of mere ordinary guilt? Perhaps, gentlemen, if he had not said this in your presence and I had reported it, you'd have held this to be impossible likewise, eh?"

With such pacific and bantering remarks did Mr. Brass refute the foul aspersion on his character; but the virtuous Sarah, moved by stronger feelings, and having at heart, perhaps, a more jealous regard for the honor of her family, flew from her brother's side, without any previous intimation of her design, and darted at the prisoner with the utmost fury. It would undoubtedly have gone hard with Kit's face, but that the wary constable, foreseeing her design, drew him aside at the critical moment, and thus placed Mr. Chuckster in circumstances of some jeopardy; for that gentleman happening to be next the object of Miss Brass's wrath; and rage being, like love and fortune, blind; was pounced upon by the fair enslaver, and had a false collar plucked up by the roots, and his hair very much dishevelled, before the exertions of the company could make her sensible of her mistake.

The constable, taking warning by this desperate attack, and thinking perhaps that it would be more satisfactory to the ends of justice if the prisoner were taken before a magistrate, whole, rather than in small pieces, led him back to the hackney-coach without more ado, and moreover insisted on Miss Brass becoming an outside passenger; to which proposal the charming creature, after a little angry discussion, yielded her consent; and so took her brother Sampson's place upon the box: Mr. Brass with some reluctance agreeing to occupy her seat inside. These arrangements perfected, they drove

to the justice-room with all speed, followed by the notary and his two friends in another coach. Mr. Chuckster alone was left behind — greatly to his indignation; for he held the evidence he could have given, relative to Kit's returning to work out the shilling, to be so very material as bearing upon his hypocritical and designing character, that he considered its suppression little better than a compromise of felony.

At the justice-room they found the single gentleman, who had gone straight there, and was expecting them with desperate impatience. But, not fifty single gentlemen rolled into one could have helped poor Kit, who, in half an hour afterwards was committed for trial, and was assured by a friendly officer on his way to prison that there was no occasion to be cast down, for the sessions would soon be on, and he would, in all likelihood, get his little affair disposed of, and be comfortably transported, in less than a fortnight.

CHAPTER LXI.

LET moralists and philosophers say what they may, it is very questionable whether a guilty man would have felt half as much misery that night, as Kit did, being innocent. The world, being in the constant commission of vast quantities of injustice, is a little too apt to comfort itself with the idea that if the victim of its falsehood and malice have a clear conscience, he cannot fail to be sustained under his trials, and somehow or other to come right at last; "in which case" say they who have hunted him down, "— though we certainly don't expect it — nobody will be better pleased than we." Whereas, the world would do well to reflect, that injustice is in itself, to every generous and properly constituted mind, an injury, of all others the most insufferable, the most torturing, and the most hard to bear; and that many clear consciences have gone to their account elsewhere, and many sound hearts have broken, because of this very reason; the knowledge of their own deserts only aggravating their sufferings, and rendering them the less endurable.

The world, however, was not in fault in Kit's case. But, Kit was innocent; and knowing this, and feeling that his best friends deemed him guilty — that Mr. and Mrs. Garland would look upon him as a monster of ingratitude — that Barbara would associate him with all

that was bad and criminal — that the pony would consider himself forsaken — and that even his own mother might perhaps yield to the strong appearances against him, and believe him to be the wretch he seemed — knowing and feeling all this, he experienced, at first, an agony of mind which no words can describe, and walked up and down the little cell in which he was locked up for the night, almost beside himself with grief.

Even when the violence of these emotions had in some degree subsided, and he was beginning to grow more calm, there came into his mind a new thought, the anguish of which was scarcely less. The child — the bright star of the simple fellow's life — she, who always came back upon him like a beautiful dream, — who had made the poorest part of his existence the happiest and best, — who had ever been so gentle, and considerate, and good — if she were ever to hear of this, what would she think! As this idea occurred to him, the walls of the prison seemed to melt away, and the old place to reveal itself in their stead, as it was wont to be on winter nights — the fireside, the little supper-table, the old man's hat, and coat, and stick — the half-opened door, leading to her little room — they were all there. And Nell herself was there, and he — both laughing heartily as they had often done — and when he had got as far as this, Kit could go no farther, but flung himself upon his poor bedstead and wept.

It was a long night, which seemed as though it would have no end; but he slept too, and dreamed — always of being at liberty, and roving about, now with one person and now with another, but ever with a vague dread of being recalled to prison; not that prison, but one which was in itself a dim idea — not of a place, but of

a care and sorrow: of something oppressive and always present, and yet impossible to define. At last, the morning dawned, and there was the jail itself — cold, black, and dreary, and very real indeed.

He was left to himself, however, and there was comfort in that. He had liberty to walk in a small paved yard at a certain hour, and learnt from the turnkey, who came to unlock his cell and show him where to wash, that there was a regular time for visiting, every day, and that if any of his friends came to see him, he would be fetched down to the grate. When he had given him this information, and a tin porringer containing his breakfast, the man locked him up again; and went clattering along the stone passage, opening and shutting a great many other doors, and raising numberless loud echoes which resounded through the building for a long time, as if they were in prison too, and unable to get out.

This turnkey had given him to understand that he was lodged, like some few others in the jail, apart from the mass of prisoners; because he was not supposed to be utterly depraved and irreclaimable, and had never occupied apartments in that mansion before. Kit was thankful for this indulgence, and sat reading the Church catechism very attentively (though he had known it by heart from a little child), until he heard the key in the lock, and the man entered again.

"Now then," he said, "come on!"

"Where to, sir?" asked Kit.

The man contented himself by briefly replying "Wisitors;" and taking him by the arm in exactly the same manner as the constable had done the day before, led him, through several winding ways and strong gates, into a passage, where he placed him at a grating and

turned upon his heel. Beyond this grating, at the distance of about four or five feet, was another, exactly like it. In the space between, sat a turnkey reading a newspaper; and outside the further railing, Kit saw, with a palpitating heart, his mother with the baby in her arms; Barbara's mother with her never-failing umbrella; and poor little Jacob, staring in with all his might, as though he were looking for the bird, or the wild beast, and thought the men were mere accidents with whom the bars could have no possible concern.

But, when little Jacob saw his brother, and, thrusting his arms between the rails to hug him, found that he came no nearer, but still stood afar off with his head resting on the arm by which he held to one of the bars, he began to cry most piteously; whereupon Kit's mother and Barbara's mother, who had restrained themselves as much as possible, burst out sobbing and weeping afresh. Poor Kit could not help joining them, and not one of them could speak a word.

During this melancholy pause, the turnkey read his newspaper with a waggish look (he had evidently got among the facetious paragraphs) until, happening to take his eyes off it for an instant, as if to get by dint of contemplation at the very marrow of some joke of a deeper sort than the rest, it appeared to occur to him, for the first time, that somebody was crying.

"Now, ladies, ladies," he said, looking round with surprise, "I'd advise you not to waste time like this. It's allowanced here, you know. You mustn't let that child make that noise either. It's against all rules."

"I'm his poor mother, sir," sobbed Mrs. Nubbles, curtseying humbly, "and this is his brother, sir. Oh dear me, dear me!"

"Well!" replied the turnkey, folding his paper on his knee, so as to get with greater convenience at the top of the next column. "It can't be helped, you know. He a'n't the only one in the same fix. You mustn't make a noise about it!"

With that, he went on reading. The man was not naturally cruel or hard-hearted. He had come to look upon felony as a kind of disorder, like the scarlet fever or erysipelas: some people had it — some hadn't — just as it might be.

"Oh! my darling Kit," said his mother, whom Barbara's mother had charitably relieved of the baby, "that I should see my poor boy here!"

"You don't believe I did what they accuse me of, mother dear?" cried Kit, in a choking voice.

"*I* believe it!" exclaimed the poor woman, "*I*, that never knew you tell a lie, or do a bad action from your cradle — that have never had a moment's sorrow on your account, except it was for the poor meals that you have taken with such good-humor and content, that I forgot how little there was, when I thought how kind and thoughtful you were, though you were but a child! — I believe it of the son that's been a comfort to me from the hour of his birth to this time, and that I never laid down one night in anger with! I believe it of you, Kit!" —

"Why then, thank God!" said Kit, clutching the bars with an earnestness that shook them, "and I can bear it, mother! Come what may, I shall always have one drop of happiness in my heart when I think that you said that."

At this, the poor woman fell a crying again, and Barbara's mother too. And little Jacob, whose dis-

jointed thoughts had by this time resolved themselves into a pretty distinct impression that Kit couldn't go out for a walk if he wanted, and that there were no birds, lions, tigers, or other natural curiosities behind those bars — nothing indeed, but a caged brother — added his tears to theirs with as little noise as possible.

Kit's mother, drying her eyes (and moistening them, poor soul, more than she dried them), now took from the ground a small basket, and submissively addressed herself to the turnkey, saying, would he please to listen to her for a minute? The turnkey, being in the very crisis and passion of a joke, motioned to her with his hand to keep silent one minute longer, for her life. Nor did he remove his hand into its former posture, but kept it in the same warning attitude until he had finished the paragraph, when he paused for a few seconds, with a smile upon his face, as who should say, "this editor is a comical blade — a funny dog," and then asked her what she wanted.

"I have brought him a little something to eat," said the good woman. "If you please, sir, might he have it?"

"Yes, — he may have it. There's no rule against that. Give it to me when you go, and I'll take care he has it."

"No, but if you please, sir — don't be angry with me, sir — I am his mother, and you had a mother once — if I might only see him eat a little bit, I should go away, so much more satisfied that he was all comfortable."

And again the tears of Kit's mother burst forth, and of Barbara's mother, and of little Jacob. As to the

baby, it was crowing and laughing with all its might — under the idea, apparently, that the whole scene had been invented and got up for its particular satisfaction.

The turnkey looked as if he thought the request a strange one and rather out of the common way, but nevertheless he laid down his paper, and coming round to where Kit's mother stood, took the basket from her, and after inspecting its contents, handed it to Kit, and went back to his place. It may be easily conceived that the prisoner had no great appetite, but he sat down on the ground, and ate as hard as he could, while, at every morsel he put into his mouth, his mother sobbed and wept afresh, though with a softened grief that bespoke the satisfaction the sight afforded her.

While he was thus engaged, Kit made some anxious inquiries about his employers, and whether they had expressed any opinion concerning him; but all he could learn was, that Mr. Abel had himself broken the intelligence to his mother, with great kindness and delicacy, late on the previous night, but had himself expressed no opinion of his innocence or guilt. Kit was on the point of mustering courage to ask Barbara's mother about Barbara, when the turnkey who had conducted him reappeared, a second turnkey appeared behind his visitors, and the third turnkey with the newspaper cried "Time's up!" — adding in the same breath "Now for the next party!" and then plunging deep into his newspaper again. Kit was taken off in an instant, with a blessing from his mother, and a scream from little Jacob, ringing in his ears. As he was crossing the next yard with the basket in his hand, under the guidance of his former conductor, another officer called to them to

stop, and came up with a pint-pot of porter in his hand.

"This is Christopher Nubbles isn't it, that come in last night for felony?" said the man.

His comrade replied that this was the chicken in question.

"Then here's your beer," said the other man to Christopher. "What are you looking at? There a'n't a discharge in it."

"I beg your pardon," said Kit. "Who sent it me?"

"Why, your friend," replied the man. "You're to have it every day, he says. And so you will, if he pays for it."

"My friend!" repeated Kit.

"You're all abroad, seemingly," returned the other man. "There's his letter. Take hold!"

Kit took it, and when he was locked up again, read as follows:—

"Drink of this cup, you'll find there's a spell in its every drop 'gainst the ills of mortality. Talk of the cordial that sparkled for Helen! *Her* cup was a fiction, but this is reality (Barclay and Co.'s). If they ever send it in a flat state, complain to the Governor.

"Yours R. S."

"R. S.!" said Kit, after some consideration. "It must be Mr. Richard Swiveller. Well, it's very kind of him, and I thank him heartily!"

CHAPTER LXII.

A FAINT light, twinkling from the window of the counting-house on Quilp's wharf, and looking inflamed and red through the night-fog, as though it suffered from it like an eye, forewarned Mr. Sampson Brass, as he approached the wooden cabin with a cautious step, that the excellent proprietor, his esteemed client, was inside, and probably waiting with his accustomed patience and sweetness of temper the fulfilment of the appointment which now brought Mr. Brass within his fair domain.

"A treacherous place to pick one's steps in, of a dark night," muttered Sampson, as he stumbled for the twentieth time over some stray lumber, and limped in pain. "I believe that boy strews the ground differently every day, on purpose to bruise and maim one; unless his master does it with his own hands, which is more than likely. I hate to come to this place without Sally. She's more protection than a dozen men."

As he paid this compliment to the merit of the absent charmer, Mr. Brass came to a halt; looking doubtfully towards the light, and over his shoulder.

"What's he about, I wonder?" murmured the lawyer, standing on tiptoe and endeavoring to obtain a glimpse of what was passing inside, which at that distance was impossible — "drinking, I suppose, — making himself

more fiery and furious, and heating his malice and mischievousness till they boil. I'm always afraid to come here by myself, when his account's a pretty large one. I don't believe he'd mind throttling me, and dropping me softly into the river, when the tide was at its strongest, any more than he'd mind killing a rat — indeed I don't know whether he wouldn't consider it a pleasant joke. Hark! Now he's singing!"

Mr. Quilp was certainly entertaining himself with vocal exercise, but it was rather a kind of chant than a song; being a monotonous repetition of one sentence in a very rapid manner, with a long stress upon the last word, which he swelled into a dismal roar. Nor did the burden of this performance bear any reference to love, or war, or wine, or loyalty, or any other, the standard topics of song, but to a subject not often set to music or generally known in ballads; the words being these: — "The worthy magistrate, after remarking that the prisoner would find some difficulty in persuading a jury to believe his tale, committed him to take his trial at the approaching sessions; and directed the customary recognizances to be entered into for the pros-e-cu-tion."

Every time he came to this concluding word, and had exhausted all possible stress upon it, Quilp burst into a shriek of laughter, and began again.

"He's dreadfully imprudent," muttered Brass, after he had listened to two or three repetitions of the chant. "Horribly imprudent. I wish he was dumb. I wish he was deaf. I wish he was blind. Hang him," cried Brass, as the chant began again. "I wish he was dead!"

Giving utterance to these friendly aspirations in behalf

of his client, Mr. Sampson composed his face into its usual state of smoothness, and waiting until the shriek came again and was dying away, went up to the wooden house, and knocked at the door.

"Come in!" cried the dwarf.

"How do you do to-night sir?" said Sampson, peeping in. "Ha, ha, ha! How do you do sir? Oh dear me, how very whimsical! Amazingly whimsical to be sure!"

"Come in, you fool!" returned the dwarf, "and don't stand there shaking your head and showing your teeth. Come in, you false witness, you perjurer, you suborner of evidence, come in!"

"He has the richest humor!" cried Brass, shutting the door behind him; "the most amazing vein of comicality! But isn't it *rather* injudicious sir?" —

"What?" demanded Quilp, "What, Judas?"

"Judas!" cried Brass. "He has such extraordinary spirits! His humor is so extremely playful! Judas! Oh yes — dear me, how very good! Ha, ha, ha!"

All this time, Sampson was rubbing his hands, and staring, with ludicrous surprise and dismay, at a great, goggle-eyed, blunt-nosed figure-head of some old ship, which was reared up against the wall in a corner near the stove, looking like a goblin or hideous idol whom the dwarf worshipped. A mass of timber on its head, carved into the dim and distant semblance of a cocked hat, together with a representation of a star on the left breast and epaulettes on the shoulders, denoted that it was intended for the effigy of some famous admiral; but, without those helps, any observer might have supposed it the authentic portrait of a distinguished merman, or great sea-monster. Being originally much too large for the

apartment which it was now employed to decorate, it had been sawn short off at the waist. Even in this state it reached from floor to ceiling; and thrusting itself forward, with that excessively wide-awake aspect, and air of somewhat obtrusive politeness, by which figure-heads are usually characterized, seemed to reduce everything else to mere pigmy proportions.

"Do you know it?" said the dwarf, watching Sampson's eyes. "Do you see the likeness?"

"Eh?" said Brass, holding his head on one side, and throwing it a little back, as connoisseurs do. "Now I look at it again, I fancy I see a — yes, there certainly is something in the smile that reminds me of — and yet upon my word I" —

Now, the fact was, that Sampson, having never seen anything in the smallest degree resembling this substantial phantom, was much perplexed; being uncertain whether Mr. Quilp considered it like himself, and had therefore bought it for a family portrait; or whether he was pleased to consider it as the likeness of some enemy. He was not very long in doubt; for, while he was surveying it with that knowing look which people assume when they are contemplating for the first time portraits which they ought to recognize but don't, the dwarf threw down the newspaper from which he had been chanting the words already quoted, and seizing a rusty iron bar, which he used in lieu of poker, dealt the figure such a stroke on the nose that it rocked again.

"Is it like Kit — is it his picture, his image, his very self?" cried the dwarf, aiming a shower of blows at the insensible countenance, and covering it with deep dimples. "Is it the exact model and counterpart of the dog — is it — is it — is it?" And with every repetition of

the question, he battered the great image, until the perspiration streamed down his face with the violence of the exercise.

Although this might have been a very comical thing to look at from a secure gallery, as a bull-fight is found to be a comfortable spectacle by those who are not in the arena, and a house on fire is better than a play to people who don't live near it, there was something in the earnestness of Mr. Quilp's manner which made his legal adviser feel that the counting-house was a little too small, and a deal too lonely, for the complete enjoyment of these humors. Therefore, he stood as far off as he could, while the dwarf was thus engaged; whimpering out but feeble applause; and when Quilp left off and sat down again from pure exhaustion, approached with more obsequiousness than ever.

"Excellent indeed!" cried Brass. "He, he! Oh, very good, sir. You know," said Sampson, looking round as if in appeal to the bruised admiral, "he's quite a remarkable man — quite!"

"Sit down," said the dwarf. "I bought the dog yesterday. I've been screwing gimlets into him, and sticking forks in his eyes, and cutting my name on him. I mean to burn him at last."

"Ha, ha!" cried Brass. "Extremely entertaining, indeed!"

"Come here!" said Quilp, beckoning him to draw near. "What's injudicious, hey?"

"Nothing sir — nothing. Scarcely worth mentioning sir; but I thought that song — admirably humorous in itself you know — was perhaps rather" —

"Yes," said Quilp, "rather what?"

"Just bordering, or as one may say remotely verging,

upon the confines of injudiciousness perhaps sir," returned Brass, looking timidly at the dwarf's cunning eyes, which were turned towards the fire and reflected its red light.

"Why?" inquired Quilp, without looking up.

"Why, you know sir," returned Brass, venturing to be more familiar: "— the fact is sir, that any allusion to these little combinings together, of friends, for objects in themselves extremely laudable, but which the law terms conspiracies, are — you take me sir? — best kept snug and among friends, you know."

"Eh!" said Quilp, looking up with a perfectly vacant countenance. "What do you mean?"

"Cautious, exceedingly cautious, very right and proper!" cried Brass, nodding his head. "Mum sir, even here — my meaning sir, exactly."

"*Your* meaning exactly, you brazen scarecrow, — what's your meaning?" retorted Quilp. "Why do you talk to me of combining together? Do *I* combine? Do I know anything about your combinings?"

"No no, sir — certainly not; not by any means," returned Brass.

"If you so wink and nod at me," said the dwarf, looking about him as if for his poker, "I'll spoil the expression of your monkey's face, I will."

"Don't put yourself out of the way I beg sir," rejoined Brass, checking himself with great alacrity. "You're quite right sir, quite right. I shouldn't have mentioned the subject sir. It's much better not to. You're quite right sir. Let us change it, if you please. You were asking, sir, Sally told me, about our lodger. He has not returned sir."

"No?" said Quilp, heating some rum in a little sauce-

pan, and watching it to prevent its boiling over. "Why not?"

"Why sir," returned Brass, "he — dear me, Mr. Quilp sir"—

"What's the matter?" said the dwarf, stopping his hand in the act of carrying the saucepan to his mouth.

"You have forgotten the water sir," said Brass. "And — excuse me sir — but it's burning hot."

Deigning no other than a practical answer to this remonstrance, Mr. Quilp raised the hot saucepan to his lips, and deliberately drank off all the spirit it contained, which might have been in quantity about half a pint, and had been but a moment before, when he took it off the fire, bubbling and hissing fiercely. Having swallowed this gentle stimulant, and shaken his fist at the admiral, he bade Mr. Brass proceed.

"But first," said Quilp, with his accustomed grin, "have a drop yourself — a nice drop — a good, warm, fiery drop."

"Why sir," replied Brass, "if there was such a thing as a mouthful of water that could be got without trouble" —

"There's no such thing to be had here," cried the dwarf. "Water for lawyers! Melted lead and brimstone, you mean, nice hot blistering pitch and tar — that's the thing for them — eh Brass, eh?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Mr. Brass. "Oh very biting! and yet it's like being tickled — there's a pleasure in it too, sir!"

"Drink that," said the dwarf, who had by this time heated some more. "Toss it off, don't leave any heel-tap, scorch your throat and be happy!"

The wretched Sampson took a few short sips of the liquor, which immediately distilled itself into burning

tears, and in that form came rolling down his cheeks into the pipkin again, turning the color of his face and eyelids to a dep red, and giving rise to a violent fit of coughing, in the midst of which he was still heard to declare, with the constancy of a martyr, that it was "beautiful indeed!" While he was yet in unspeakable agonies, the dwarf renewed their conversation.

"The lodger," said Quilp, — "what about him?"

"He is still sir," returned Brass, with intervals of coughing, "stopping with the Garland family. He has only been home once, sir, since the day of the examination of that culprit. He informed Mr. Richard sir, that he couldn't bear the house after what had taken place; that he was wretched in it; and that he looked upon himself as being in a certain kind of way the cause of the occurrence. — A very excellent lodger sir. I hope we may not lose him."

"Yah!" cried the dwarf. "Never thinking of anybody but yourself — why don't you retrench then — scrape up, hoard, economize, eh?"

"Why sir," replied Brass, "upon my word I think Sarah's as good an economizer as any going. I do indeed, Mr. Quilp."

"Moisten your clay, wet the other eye, drink man!" cried the dwarf. "You took a clerk to oblige me."

"Delighted sir, I am sure, at any time," replied Sampson. "Yes sir, I did."

"Then, now you may discharge him," said Quilp. "There's a means of retrenchment for you at once."

"Discharge Mr. Richard sir?" cried Brass.

"Have you more than one clerk, you parrot, that you ask the question? Yes."

"Upon my word sir," said Brass. "I wasn't prepared for this" —

"How could you be?" sneered the dwarf, "when *I* wasn't? How often am I to tell you that I brought him to you that I might always have my eye on him and know where he was — and that I had a plot, a scheme, a little quiet piece of enjoyment afoot, of which the very cream and essence was, that this old man and grandchild (who have sunk underground I think) should be, while he and his precious friend believed them rich, in reality as poor as frozen rats?"

"I quite understood that sir," rejoined Brass. "Thoroughly."

"Well sir," retorted Quilp, "and do you understand now, that they're *not* poor — that they can't be, if they have such men as your lodger searching for them, and scouring the country far and wide."

"Of course I do sir," said Sampson.

"Of course you do," retorted the dwarf, viciously snapping at his words. "Of course do you understand then, that it's no matter what comes of this fellow? of course do you understand that for any other purpose he's no man for me, nor for you?"

"I have frequently said to Sarah sir," returned Brass, "that he was of no use at all in the business. You can't put any confidence in him sir. If you'll believe me I've found that fellow, in the commonest little matters of the office that have been trusted to him, blurting out the truth, though expressly cautioned. The aggravation of that chap sir, has exceeded anything you can imagine, it has indeed. Nothing but the respect and obligation I owe to you sir" —

As it was plain that Sampson was bent on a complimentary harangue, unless he received a timely interruption, Mr. Quilp politely tapped him on the crown of his

head with the little saucepan, and requested that he would be so obliging as to hold his peace.

"Practical, sir, practical," said Brass, rubbing the place and smiling; "but still extremely pleasant — immensely so!"

"Hearken to me, will you?" returned Quilp, "or I'll be a little more pleasant, presently. There's no chance of his comrade and friend returning. The scamp has been obliged to fly, as I learn, for some knavery, and has found his way abroad. Let him rot there."

"Certainly sir. Quite proper. — Forcible!" cried Brass, glancing at the admiral again, as if he made a third in company. "Extremely forcible!"

"I hate him," said Quilp between his teeth, "and have always hated him, for family reasons. Besides, he was an intractable ruffian; otherwise *he* would have been of use. This fellow is pigeon-hearted, and light-headed. I don't want him any longer. Let him hang or drown — starve — go to the devil."

"By all means, sir," returned Brass. "When would you wish him sir, to — ha, ha! — to make that little excursion?"

"When this trial's over," said Quilp. "As soon as that's ended, send him about his business."

"It shall be done, sir," returned Brass; "by all means. It will be rather a blow to Sarah, sir, but she has all her feelings under control. Ah, Mr. Quilp, I often think sir, if it had only pleased Providence to bring you and Sarah together, in earlier life, what blessed results would have flowed from such a union! You never saw our dear father, sir? — A charming gentleman. Sarah was his pride and joy, sir. He would have closed his eyes in bliss, would Foxey, Mr. Quilp,

if he could have found her such a partner. You esteem her, sir?"

"I love her," croaked the dwarf.

"You're very good, sir," returned Brass, "I am sure. Is there any other order, sir, that I can take a note of, besides this little matter of Mr. Richard?"

"None," replied the dwarf, seizing the saucepan. "Let us drink the lovely Sarah."

"If we could do it in something, sir, that wasn't quite boiling," suggested Brass humbly, "perhaps it would be better. I think it will be more agreeable to Sarah's feelings, when she comes to hear from me of the honor you have done her, if she learns it was in liquor rather cooler than the last, sir."

But to these remonstrances, Mr. Quilp turned a deaf ear. Sampson Brass, who was, by this time, anything but sober, being compelled to take further draughts of the same strong bowl, found that, instead of at all contributing to his recovery, they had the novel effect of making the counting-house spin round and round with extreme velocity, and causing the floor and ceiling to heave in a very distressing manner. After a brief stupor, he awoke to a consciousness of being partly under the table and partly under the grate. This position not being the most comfortable one he could have chosen for himself, he managed to stagger to his feet, and, holding on by the admiral, looked round for his host.

Mr. Brass's first impression was, that his host was gone and had left him there alone — perhaps locked him in for the night. A strong smell of tobacco, however, suggesting a new train of ideas, he looked upward, and saw that the dwarf was smoking in his hammock.

"Good-by, sir," cried Brass faintly. "Good-by, sir."

"Won't you stop all night?" said the dwarf, peeping out. "Do stop all night!"

"I couldn't indeed, sir," replied Brass, who was almost dead from nausea and the closeness of the room. "If you'd have the goodness to show me a light, so that I may see my way across the yard, sir" —

Quilp was out in an instant; not with his legs first, or his head first, or his arms first, but bodily — altogether.

"To be sure," he said, taking up a lantern, which was now the only light in the place. "Be careful how you go, my dear friend. Be sure to pick your way among the timber, for all the rusty nails are upwards. There's a dog in the lane. He bit a man last night, and a woman the night before, and last Tuesday he killed a child — but that was in play. Don't go too near him."

"Which side of the road is he, sir?" asked Brass, in great dismay.

"He lives on the right hand," said Quilp, "but sometimes he hides on the left, ready for a spring. He's uncertain in that respect. Mind you take care of yourself. I'll never forgive you if you don't. There's the light out — never mind — you know the way — straight on!"

Quilp had slyly shaded the light by holding it against his breast, and now stood chuckling and shaking from head to foot in a rapture of delight, as he heard the lawyer stumbling up the yard, and now and then falling heavily down. At length, however, he got quit of the place, and was out of hearing.

The dwarf shut himself up again, and sprang once more into his hammock.

CHAPTER LXIII.

THE professional gentleman who had given Kit that consolatory piece of information relative to the settlement of his trifle of business at the Old Bailey, and the probability of its being very soon disposed of, turned out to be quite correct in his prognostications. In eight days' time, the sessions commenced. In one day afterwards, the Grand Jury found a true bill against Christopher Nubbles for felony; and in two days from that finding, the aforesaid Christopher Nubbles was called upon to plead Guilty or Not Guilty to an indictment for that he the said Christopher did feloniously abstract and steal from the dwelling-house and office of one Sampson Brass, gentleman, one bank-note for five pounds issued by the Governor and Company of the Bank of England; in contravention of the statutes in that case made and provided, and against the peace of our Sovereign Lord the King, his crown, and dignity.

To this indictment, Christopher Nubbles, in a low and trembling voice, plead Not Guilty; and here, let those who are in the habit of forming hasty judgments from appearances, and who would have had Christopher, if innocent, speak out very strong and loud, observe, that confinement and anxiety will subdue the stoutest hearts; and that to one who has been close shut up, though it be only for ten or eleven days, seeing but stone walls and a

very few stony faces, the sudden entrance into a great hall filled with life, is a rather disconcerting and startling circumstance. To this, it must be added, that life in a wig, is, to a large class of people, much more terrifying and impressive than life with its own head of hair; and if, in addition to these considerations, there be taken into account Kit's natural emotion on seeing the two Mr. Garlands and the little notary looking on with pale and anxious faces, it will perhaps seem matter of no very great wonder that he should have been rather out of sorts, and unable to make himself quite at home.

Although he had never seen either of the Mr. Garlands, or Mr. Witherden, since the time of his arrest, he had been given to understand that they had employed counsel for him. Therefore, when one of the gentlemen in wigs got up and said "I am for the prisoner my lord," Kit made him a bow; and when another gentleman in a wig got up and said "And I'm against him my lord," Kit trembled very much, and bowed to him too. And didn't he hope in his own heart that his gentleman was a match for the other gentleman, and would make him ashamed of himself in no time!

The gentleman who was against him had to speak first, and being in dreadfully good spirits (for he had, in the last trial, very nearly procured the acquittal of a young gentleman who had had the misfortune to murder his father) he spoke up, you may be sure; telling the jury that if they acquitted this prisoner they must expect to suffer no less pangs and agonies than he had told the other jury they would certainly undergo if they convicted that prisoner. And when he had told them all about the case, and that he had never known a worse case, he stopped a little while, like a man who

had something terrible to tell them, and then said that he understood an attempt would be made by his learned friend (and here he looked sideways at Kit's gentleman) to impeach the testimony of those immaculate witnesses whom he should call before them; but he did hope and trust that his learned friend would have a greater respect and veneration for the character of the prosecutor; than whom, as he well knew, there did not exist, and never had existed, a more honorable member of that most honorable profession to which he was attached. And then he said, did the jury know Bevis Marks? And if they did know Bevis Marks (as he trusted, for their own characters, they did) did they know the historical and elevating associations connected with that most remarkable spot? Did they believe that a man like Brass could reside in a place like Bevis Marks, and not be a virtuous and most upright character? And when he had said a great deal to them on this point, he remembered that it was an insult to their understandings to make any remarks on what they must have felt so strongly without him, and therefore called Sampson Brass into the witness-box, straightway.

Then up comes Mr. Brass, very brisk and fresh; and, having bowed to the judge, like a man who has had the pleasure of seeing him before, and who hopes he has been pretty well since their last meeting, folds his arms, and looks at his gentleman as much as to say "Here I am — full of evidence — Tap me!" And the gentleman does tap him presently, and with great discretion too; drawing off the evidence by little and little, and making it run quite clear and bright in the eyes of all present. Then, Kit's gentleman takes him in hand, but

can make nothing of him; and after a great many very long questions and very short answers, Mr. Sampson Brass goes down in glory.

To him succeeds Sarah, who in like manner is easy to be managed by Mr. Brass's gentleman, but very obdurate to Kit's. In short, Kit's gentleman can get nothing out of her but a repetition of what she has said before (only a little stronger this time, as against his client), and therefore lets her go, in some confusion. Then, Mr. Brass's gentleman calls Richard Swiveller, and Richard Swiveller appears accordingly.

Now, Mr. Brass's gentleman has it whispered in his ear that this witness is disposed to be friendly to the prisoner — which, to say the truth, he is rather glad to hear, as his strength is considered to lie in what is familiarly termed badgering. Wherefore, he begins by requesting the officer to be quite sure that this witness kisses the book, and then goes to work at him, tooth and nail.

"Mr. Swiveller," says this gentleman to Dick, when he has told his tale with evident reluctance and a desire to make the best of it: "Pray sir, where did you dine yesterday?" — "Where did I dine yesterday?" — "Ay sir, where did you dine yesterday — was it near here sir?" — "Oh to be sure — yes — just over the way." — "To be sure. Yes. Just over the way," repeats Mr. Brass's gentleman, with a glance at the court — "Alone sir?" — "I beg your pardon," says Mr. Swiveller, who has not caught the question — "*Alone* sir?" repeats Mr. Brass's gentleman in a voice of thunder, "did you dine alone? Did you treat anybody sir? Come!" — "Oh yes to be sure — yes, I did," says Mr. Swiveller with a smile. "Have the goodness to banish a levity, sir, which

is very ill-suited to the place in which you stand (though perhaps you have reason to be thankful that it's only that place)," says Mr. Brass's gentleman, with a nod of the head, insinuating that the dock is Mr. Swiveller's legitimate sphere of action; "and attend to me. You were waiting about here, yesterday, in expectation that this trial was coming on. You dined over the way. You treated somebody. Now, was that somebody brother to the prisoner at the bar?" — Mr. Swiveller is proceeding to explain — "Yes or No sir," cries Mr. Brass's gentleman — "But will you allow me — " — "Yes or No sir" — "Yes it was, but — " — "Yes it was," cries the gentleman, taking him up short — "And a very pretty witness *you* are!"

Down sits Mr. Brass's gentleman. Kit's gentleman, not knowing how the matter really stands, is afraid to pursue the subject. Richard Swiveller retires abashed. Judge, jury, and spectators, have visions of his lounging about, with an ill-looking, large-whiskered, dissolute young fellow of six feet high. The reality is, little Jacob, with the calves of his legs exposed to the open air, and himself tied up in a shawl. Nobody knows the truth; everybody believes a falsehood; and all because of the ingenuity of Mr. Brass's gentleman.

Then, come the witnesses to character, and here Mr. Brass's gentleman shines again. It turns out that Mr. Garland has had no character with Kit, no recommendation of him but from his own mother, and that he was suddenly dismissed by his former master for unknown reasons. "Really Mr. Garland" says Mr. Brass's gentleman, "for a person who has arrived at your time of life, you are, to say the least of it, singularly indiscreet, I think." The jury think so too, and

find Kit guilty. He is taken off, humbly protesting his innocence. The spectators settle themselves in their places with renewed attention, for there are several female witnesses to be examined in the next case, and it has been rumored that Mr. Brass's gentleman will make great fun in cross-examining them for the prisoner.

Kit's mother, poor woman, is waiting at the grate below stairs, accompanied by Barbara's mother (who, honest soul! never does anything but cry and hold the baby), and a sad interview ensues. The newspaper-reading-turnkey has told them all. He don't think it will be transportation for life, because there's time to prove the good character yet, and that is sure to serve him. He wonders what he did it for. "He never did it!" cries Kit's mother. "Well," says the turnkey, "I won't contradict you. It's all one, now, whether he did it or not."

Kit's mother can reach his hand through the bars, and she clasps it — God, and those to whom He has given such tenderness, only know in how much agony. Kit bids her keep a good heart, and, under pretence of having the children lifted up to kiss him, prays Barbara's mother in a whisper to take her home.

"Some friend will rise up for us, mother," cries Kit, "I am sure. If not now, before long. My innocence will come out, mother, and I shall be brought back again; I feel a confidence in that. You must teach little Jacob and the baby how all this was, for if they thought I had ever been dishonest, when they grew old enough to understand, it would break my heart to know it, if I was thousands of miles away. — Oh! is there no good gentleman here, who will take care of her!"

The hand slips out of his, for the poor creature sinks down upon the earth, insensible. Richard Swiveller comes hastily up, elbows the by-standers out of the way, takes her (after some trouble) in one arm after the manner of theatrical ravishers, and, nodding to Kit, and commanding Barbara's mother to follow, for he has a coach waiting, bears her swiftly off.

Well; Richard took her home. And what astonishing absurdities in the way of quotation from song and poem, he perpetrated on the road, no man knows. He took her home, and stayed till she was recovered; and, having no money to pay the coach, went back in state to Bevis Marks, bidding the driver (for it was Saturday night) wait at the door while he went in for "change."

"Mr. Richard sir," said Brass cheerfully, "Good evening!"

Monstrous as Kit's tale had appeared, at first, Mr. Richard did, that night, half suspect his affable employer of some deep villany. Perhaps it was but the misery he had just witnessed which gave his careless nature this impulse; but, be that as it may, it was very strong upon him, and he said in as few words as possible, what he wanted.

"Money?" cried Brass, taking out his purse. "Ha, ha! To be sure Mr. Richard, to be sure sir. All men must live. You haven't change for a five-pound note, have you sir?"

"No," returned Dick, shortly.

"Oh!" said Brass, "here's the very sum. That saves trouble. You're very welcome I'm sure. — Mr. Richard sir" —

Dick, who had by this time reached the door, turned round.

"You needn't," said Brass, "trouble yourself to come back any more sir."

"Eh?"

"You see, Mr. Richard," said Brass, thrusting his hands in his pockets, and rocking himself to and fro on his stool, "the fact is, that a man of your abilities is lost sir, quite lost, in our dry and mouldy line. It's terrible drudgery — shocking. I should say, now, that the stage, or the — or the army Mr. Richard — or something very superior in the licensed victualling way — was the kind of thing that would call out the genius of such a man as you. I hope you'll look in to see us now and then. Sally, sir, will be delighted I'm sure. She's extremely sorry to lose you Mr. Richard, but a sense of her duty to society reconciles her. An amazing creature that, sir! You'll find the money quite correct, I think. There's a cracked window sir, but I've not made any deduction on that account. Whenever we part with friends, Mr. Richard, let us part liberally. A delightful sentiment sir!"

To all these rambling observations, Mr. Swiveller answered not one word, but, returning for the aquatic jacket, rolled it into a tight round ball: looking steadily at Brass meanwhile as if he had some intention of bowling him down with it. He only took it under his arm, however, and marched out of the office in profound silence. When he had closed the door, he reopened it, stared in again for a few moments with the same portentous gravity, and nodding his head once, in a slow and ghost-like manner, vanished.

He paid the coachman, and turned his back on Bevis Marks, big with great designs for the comforting of Kit's mother, and the aid of Kit himself.

But, the lives of gentlemen devoted to such pleasures as Richard Swiveller, are extremely precarious. The spiritual excitement of the last fortnight, working upon a system affected in no slight degree by the spirituous excitement of some years, proved a little too much for him. That very night, Mr. Richard was seized with an alarming illness, and in twenty-four hours was stricken with a raging fever.

CHAPTER LXIV.

Tossing to and fro upon his hot, uneasy bed; tormented by a fierce thirst which nothing could appease; unable to find, in any change of posture, a moment's peace or ease; and rambling, ever, through deserts of thought where there was no resting-place, no sight or sound suggestive of refreshment or repose, nothing but a dull eternal weariness, with no change but the restless shiftings of his miserable body, and the weary wanderings of his mind, constant still to one ever-present anxiety — to a sense of something left undone, of some fearful obstacle, to be surmounted, of some carking care that would not be driven away, and which haunted the distempered brain, now in this form, now in that, always shadowy and dim, but recognizable for the same phantom in every shape it took; darkening every vision like an evil conscience, and making slumber horrible — in these slow tortures of his dread disease, the unfortunate Richard lay wasting and consuming inch by inch, until, at last, when he seemed to fight and struggle to rise up, and to be held down by devils, he sank into a deep sleep, and dreamed no more.

He awoke. With a sensation of most blissful rest, better than sleep itself, he began gradually to remember something of these sufferings, and to think what a long night it had been, and whether he had not been delirious

twice or thrice. Happening, in the midst of these cogitations, to raise his hand, he was astonished to find how heavy it seemed, and yet how thin and light it really was. Still, he felt indifferent and happy; and having no curiosity to pursue the subject, remained in the same waking slumber until his attention was attracted by a cough. This made him doubt, whether he had locked his door last night, and feel a little surprised at having a companion in the room. Still he lacked energy to follow up this train of thought; and unconsciously fell, in a luxury of repose, to staring at some green stripes on the bed-furniture, and associating them strangely with patches of fresh turf, while the yellow ground between, made gravel-walks, and so helped out a long perspective of trim gardens.

He was rambling in imagination on these terraces, and had quite lost himself among them indeed, when he heard the cough once more. The walks shrunk into stripes again at the sound; and raising himself a little in the bed, and holding the curtain open with one hand, he looked out.

The same room certainly, and still by candle-light; but with what unbounded astonishment did he see all those bottles, and basins, and articles of linen airing by the fire, and such-like furniture of a sick chamber — all very clean and neat, but all quite different from anything he had left there, when he went to bed! The atmosphere, too, filled with a cool smell of herbs and vinegar; the floor newly sprinkled; the — the what? The Marchioness?

Yes; playing cribbage with herself at the table. There she sat, intent upon her game, coughing now and then in a subdued manner as if she feared to disturb him

— shuffling the cards, cutting, dealing, playing, counting, pegging — going through all the mysteries of cribbage as if she had been in full practice from her cradle!

Mr. Swiveller contemplated these things for a short time, and suffering the curtain to fall into its former position, laid his head on the pillow again.

"I'm dreaming," thought Richard, "that's clear. When I went to bed, my hands were not made of eggshells; and now I can almost see through 'em. If this is not a dream, I have woke up, by mistake, in an Arabian Night, instead of a London one. But I have no doubt I'm asleep. Not the least."

Here the small servant had another cough.

"Very remarkable!" thought Mr. Swiveller. "I never dreamt such a real cough as that, before. I don't know, indeed, that I ever dreamt either a cough or a sneeze. Perhaps it's part of the philosophy of dreams that one never does. There's another — and another — I say! — I'm dreaming rather fast!"

For the purpose of testing his real condition, Mr. Swiveller, after some reflection, pinched himself in the arm.

"Queerer still!" he thought. "I came to bed rather plump than otherwise, and now there's nothing to lay hold of. I'll take another survey."

The result of this additional inspection was, to convince Mr. Swiveller that the objects by which he was surrounded were real, and that he saw them, beyond all question, with his waking eyes.

"It's an Arabian Night; that's what it is," said Richard. "I'm in Damascus or Grand Cairo. The Marchioness is a Genie, and having had a wager with another Genie about who is the handsomest young man

alive, and the worthiest to be the husband of the Princess of China, has brought me away, room and all, to compare us together. Perhaps," said Mr. Swiveller, turning languidly round on his pillow, and looking on that side of his bed which was next the wall, "the Princess may be still — No, she's gone."

Not feeling quite satisfied with this explanation, as, even taking it to be the correct one, it still involved a little mystery and doubt, Mr. Swiveller raised the curtain again, determined to take the first favorable opportunity of addressing his companion. An occasion soon presented itself. The Marchioness dealt, turned up a knave, and omitted to take the usual advantage; upon which, Mr. Swiveller called out as loud as he could — "Two for his heels!"

The Marchioness jumped up quickly and clapped her hands. "Arabian Night, certainly," thought Mr. Swiveller; "they always clap their hands instead of ringing the bell. Now for the two thousand black slaves, with jars of jewels on their heads!"

It appeared, however, that she had only clapped her hands for joy; as, directly afterwards she began to laugh, and then to cry; declaring, not in choice Arabic but in familiar English, that she was "so glad, she didn't know what to do."

"Marchioness," said Mr. Swiveller, thoughtfully, "be pleased to draw nearer. First of all, will you have the goodness to inform me where I shall find my voice; and secondly, what has become of my flesh?"

The Marchioness only shook her head mournfully, and cried again; whereupon Mr. Swiveller (being very weak) felt his own eyes affected likewise.

"I begin to infer, from your manner, and these ap-

pearances, Marchioness," said Richard after a pause, and smiling with a trembling lip, "that I have been ill."

"You just have!" replied the small servant, wiping her eyes. "And haven't you been a talking nonsense!"

"Oh!" said Dick. "Very ill, Marchioness, have I been?"

"Dead, all but," replied the small servant. "I never thought you'd get better. Thank Heaven you have!"

Mr. Swiveller was silent for a long while. By and by, he began to talk again: inquiring how long he had been there.

"Three weeks to-morrow," replied the small servant.

"Three what?" said Dick.

"Weeks," returned the Marchioness emphatically; "three long, slow, weeks."

The bare thought of having been in such extremity, caused Richard to fall into another silence, and to lie flat down again, at his full length. The Marchioness, having arranged the bedclothes more comfortably, and felt that his hands and forehead were quite cool — a discovery that filled her with delight — cried a little more, and then applied herself to getting tea ready, and making some thin dry toast.

While she was thus engaged, Mr. Swiveller looked on with a grateful heart, very much astonished to see how thoroughly at home she made herself, and attributing this attention, in its origin, to Sally Brass, whom, in his own mind, he could not thank enough. When the Marchioness had finished her toasting, she spread a clean cloth on a tray, and brought him some crisp slices and a great basin of weak tea, with which (she said) the doctor had left word he might refresh himself when he awoke. She propped him up with pillows, if not as skilfully as

if she had been a professional nurse all her life, at least as tenderly; and looked on with unutterable satisfaction while the patient — stopping every now and then to shake her by the hand — took his poor meal with an appetite and relish, which the greatest dainties of the earth, under any other circumstances, would have failed to provoke. Having cleared away, and disposed everything comfortably about him again, she sat down at the table to take her own tea.

"Marchioness," said Mr. Swiveller, "how's Sally?"

The small servant screwed her face into an expression of the very utmost entanglement of slyness, and shook her head.

"What, haven't you seen her lately?" said Dick.

"Seen her!" cried the small servant. "Bless you, I've run away!"

Mr. Swiveller immediately laid himself down again quite flat, and so remained for about five minutes. By slow degrees he resumed his sitting posture after that lapse of time, and inquired —

"And where do you live, Marchioness?"

"Live!" cried the small servant. "Here!"

"Oh!" said Mr. Swiveller.

And with that he fell down flat again, as suddenly as if he had been shot. Thus he remained, motionless and bereft of speech, until she had finished her meal, put everything in its place, and swept the hearth; when he motioned her to bring a chair to the bedside, and, being propped up again, opened a further conversation.

"And so," said Dick, "you have run away?"

"Yes," said the Marchioness, "and they've been a tizing of me."

"Been — I beg your pardon," said Dick — "what have they been doing?"

"Been a tizing of me — tizing you know — in the newspapers," rejoined the Marchioness.

"Ay, ay," said Dick, "advertising?"

The small servant nodded, and winked. Her eyes were so red with waking and crying, that the Tragic Muse might have winked with greater consistency. And so Dick felt.

"Tell me," said he, "how it was that you thought of coming here."

"Why, you see," returned the Marchioness, "when you was gone, I hadn't any friend at all, because the lodger he never come back, and I didn't know where either him or you was to be found, you know. But one morning, when I was" —

"Was near a key-hole?" suggested Mr. Swiveller, observing that she faltered.

"Well then," said the small servant, nodding; "when I was near the office key-hole — as you see me through, you know — I heard somebody saying that she lived here, and was the lady whose house you lodged at, and that you was took very bad, and wouldn't nobody come and take care of you. Mr. Brass, he says, 'It's no business of mine,' he says; and Miss Sally, she says, 'He's a funny chap, but it's no business of mine;' and the lady went away, and slammed the door to, when she went out, I can tell you. So I ran away that night, and come here, and told 'em you was my brother, and they believed me, and I've been here ever since."

"This poor little Marchioness has been wearing herself to death!" cried Dick.

"No I haven't," she returned, "not a bit of it. Don't

you mind about me. I like sitting up, and I've often had a sleep, bless you, in one of them chairs. But if you could have seen how you tried to jump out o' winder, and if you could have heard how you used to keep on singing and making speeches, you wouldn't have believed it — I'm so glad you're better, Mr. Liverer."

"Liverer indeed!" said Dick thoughtfully. "It's well I *am* a liverer. I strongly suspect I should have died, Marchioness, but for you."

At this point, Mr. Swiveller took the small servant's hand in his, again, and being, as we have seen, but poorly, might in struggling to express his thanks have made his eyes as red as hers, but that she quickly changed the theme by making him lie down, and urging him to keep very quiet.

"The doctor," she told him, "said you was to be kept quite still, and there was to be no noise nor nothing. Now, take a rest, and then we'll talk again. I'll sit by you, you know. If you shut your eyes, perhaps you'll go to sleep. You'll be all the better for it, if you do."

The Marchioness, in saying these words, brought a little table to the bedside, took her seat at it, and began to work away at the concoction of some cooling drink, with the address of a score of chemists. Richard Swiveller, being indeed fatigued, fell into a slumber, and waking in about half an hour, inquired what time it was.

"Just gone half after six," replied his small friend, helping him to sit up again.

"Marchioness," said Richard, passing his hand over his forehead and turning suddenly round, as though the

subject but that moment flashed upon him, "what has become of Kit?"

He had been sentenced to transportation for a great many years, she said.

"Has he gone?" asked Dick — "his mother — how is she, — what has become of her?"

His nurse shook her head, and answered that she knew nothing about them. "But, if I thought," said she, very slowly, "that you'd keep quiet, and not put yourself into another fever, I could tell you — but I won't now."

"Yes, do," said Dick. "It will amuse me."

"Oh! would it though!" rejoined the small servant, with a horrified look. "I know better than that. Wait till you're better, and then I'll tell you."

Dick looked very earnestly at his little friend: and his eyes, being large and hollow from illness, assisted the expression so much, that she was quite frightened, and besought him not to think any more about it. What had already fallen from her, however, had not only piqued his curiosity, but seriously alarmed him, wherefore he urged her to tell him the worst at once.

"Oh! there's no worst in it," said the small servant. "It hasn't anything to do with you."

"Has it anything to do with — is it anything you heard through chinks or key-holes — and that you were not intended to hear?" asked Dick, in a breathless state.

"Yes," replied the small servant.

"In — in Bevis Marks?" pursued Dick hastily. "Conversations between Brass and Sally?"

"Yes," cried the small servant again.

Richard Swiveller thrust his lank arm out of bed,

and, griping her by the wrist and drawing her close to him, bade her out with it, and freely too, or he would not answer for the consequences; being wholly unable to endure that state of excitement and expectation. She, seeing that he was greatly agitated, and that the effects of postponing her revelation might be much more injurious than any that were likely to ensue from its being made at once, promised compliance, on condition that the patient kept himself perfectly quiet, and abstained from starting up or tossing about.

"But if you begin to do that," said the small servant, "I'll leave off. And so I tell you."

"You can't leave off, till you have gone on," said Dick. "And do go on, there's a darling. Speak, sister, speak. Pretty Polly say. Oh tell me when, and tell me where, pray Marchioness, I beseech you!"

Unable to resist these fervent adjurations, which Richard Swiveller poured out as passionately as if they had been of the most solemn and tremendous nature, his companion spoke thus, —

"Well! Before I run away, I used to sleep in the kitchen — where we played cards, you know. Miss Sally used to keep the key of the kitchen-door in her pocket, and she always come down at night to take away the candle and rake out the fire. When she had done that, she left me to go to bed in the dark, locked the door on the outside, put the key in her pocket again, and kept me locked up till she come down in the morning — very early I can tell you — and let me out. I was terrible afraid of being kept like this, because if there was a fire, I thought they might forget me and only take care of themselves you know. So, whenever I see an old rusty key anywhere, I picked it up, and tried if it would fit

the door, and at last I found in the dust cellar, a key that *did* fit it."

Here, Mr. Swiveller made a violent demonstration with his legs. But the small servant immediately pausing in her talk, he subsided again, and pleading a momentary forgetfulness of their compact, entreated her to proceed.

"They kept me very short," said the small servant. "Oh! you can't think how short they kept me! So I used to come out at night after they'd gone to bed, and feel about in the dark for bits of biscuit, or sangwitches that you'd left in the office, or even pieces of orange peel to put into cold water and make believe it was wine. Did you ever taste orange peel and water?"

Mr. Swiveller replied that he had never tasted that ardent liquor; and once more urged his friend to resume the thread of her narrative.

"If you make believe very much, it's quite nice," said the small servant; "but if you don't, you know, it seems as if it would bear a little more seasoning, certainly. Well, sometimes I used to come out after they'd gone to bed, and sometimes before, you know; and one or two nights before there was all that precious noise in the office — when the young man was took, I mean — I come up-stairs while Mr. Brass and Miss Sally was a sittin' at the office fire; and I'll tell you the truth, that I come to listen again, about the key of the safe."

Mr. Swiveller gathered up his knees so as to make a great cone of the bedclothes, and conveyed into his countenance an expression of the utmost concern. But, the small servant pausing, and holding up her finger, the cone gently disappeared, though the look of concern did not.

"There was him and her," said the small servant, "a sittin' by the fire, and talking softly together. Mr. Brass says to Miss Sally, 'Upon my word,' he says, 'it's a dangerous thing, and it might get us into a world of trouble, and I don't half like it.' She says — you know her way — she says, 'You're the chickenest-hearted, feeblest, faintest man I ever see, and I think,' she says, 'that I ought to have been the brother, and you the sister. Isn't Quilp,' she says, 'our principal support?' 'He certainly is,' says Mr. Brass. 'And a'n't we,' she says, 'constantly ruining somebody or other in the way of business?' 'We certainly are,' says Mr. Brass. 'Then does it signify,' she says, 'about ruining this Kit when Quilp desires it?' 'It certainly does not signify,' says Mr. Brass. Then, they whispered and laughed for a long time about there being no danger if it was well done, and then Mr. Brass pulls out his pocket-book, and says, 'Well,' he says, 'here it is — Quilp's own five-pound note. We'll agree that way then,' he says. 'Kit's coming to-morrow morning, I know. While he's upstairs, you'll get out of the way, and I'll clear off Mr. Richard. Having Kit alone, I'll hold him in conversation, and put this property in his hat. I'll manage so, besides,' he says, 'that Mr. Richard shall find it there, and be the evidence. And if that don't get Christopher out of Mr. Quilp's way, and satisfy Mr. Quilp's grudges,' he says, 'the Devil's in it.' Miss Sally laughed, and said that was the plan, and as they seemed to be moving away, and I was afraid to stop any longer, I went downstairs again. — There!"

The small servant had gradually worked herself into as much agitation as Mr. Swiveller, and therefore made no effort to restrain him when he sat up in bed and

hastily demanded whether this story had been told to anybody.

"How could it be?" replied his nurse. "I was almost afraid to think about it, and hoped the young man would be let off. When I heard 'em say they had found him guilty of what he didn't do, you was gone, and so was the lodger — though I think I should have been frightened to tell him, even if he'd been there. Ever since I come here, you've been out of your senses, and what would have been the good of telling you then?"

"Marchioness," said Mr. Swiveller, plucking off his nightcap and flinging it to the other end of the room; "if you'll do me the favor to retire for a few minutes and see what sort of a night it is, I'll get up."

"You mustn't think of such a thing," cried his nurse.

"I must indeed," said the patient, looking round the room. "Whereabouts are my clothes?"

"Oh I'm so glad — you haven't got any," replied the Marchioness.

"Ma'am!" said Mr. Swiveller, in great astonishment.

"I've been obliged to sell them, every one, to get the things that was ordered for you. But don't take on about that," urged the Marchioness, as Dick fell back upon his pillow. "You're too weak to stand, indeed!"

"I am afraid," said Richard dolefully, "that you're right. What ought I to do! what is to be done!"

It naturally occurred to him on very little reflection, that the first step to take would be to communicate with one of the Mr. Garlands instantly. It was very possible that Mr. Abel had not yet left the office. In as little time as it takes to tell it, the small servant had the address in pencil on a piece of paper; a verbal description of father and son, which would enable her to recognize

either without difficulty; and a special caution to be shy of Mr. Chuckster, in consequence of that gentleman's known antipathy to Kit. Armed with these slender powers, she hurried away, commissioned to bring either old Mr. Garland or Mr. Abel, bodily, to that apartment.

"I suppose," said Dick, as she closed the door slowly, and peeped into the room again, to make sure that he was comfortable, "I suppose there's nothing left — not so much as a waistcoat even?"

"No, nothing."

"It's embarrassing," said Mr. Swiveller, "in case of fire — even an umbrella would be something — but you did quite right, dear Marchioness. I should have died without you!"

CHAPTER LXV.

It was well for the small servant that she was of a sharp, quick nature, or the consequence of sending her out alone, from the very neighborhood in which it was most dangerous for her to appear, would probably have been the restoration of Miss Sally Brass to the supreme authority over her person. Not unmindful of the risk she ran, however, the Marchioness no sooner left the house than she dived into the first dark by-way that presented itself, and, without any present reference to the point to which her journey tended, made it her first business to put two good miles of brick and mortar between herself and Bevis Marks.

When she had accomplished this object, she began to shape her course for the notary's office to which — shrewdly inquiring of apple-women and oyster-sellers at street corners, rather than in lighted shops or of well-dressed people, at the hazard of attracting notice — she easily procured a direction. As carrier-pigeons, on being first let loose in a strange place, beat the air at random for a short time, before darting off towards the spot for which they are designed, so did the Marchioness flutter round and round until she believed herself in safety, and then bear swiftly down upon the port for which she was bound.

She had no bonnet — nothing on her head but a

great cap which, in some old time, had been worn by Sally Brass, whose taste in head-dresses was, as we have seen, peculiar — and her speed was rather retarded than assisted by her shoes, which, being extremely large and slipshod, flew off every now and then, and were difficult to find again, among the crowd of passengers. Indeed, the poor little creature experienced so much trouble and delay from having to grope for these articles of dress in mud and kennel, and suffered in these researches so much jostling, pushing, squeezing, and bandying from hand to hand, that by the time she reached the street in which the notary lived, she was fairly worn out and exhausted, and could not refrain from tears.

But to have got there at last was a great comfort, especially as there were lights still burning in the office window, and therefore some hope that she was not too late. So, the Marchioness dried her eyes with the backs of her hands, and, stealing softly up the steps, peeped in through the glass-door.

Mr. Chuckster was standing behind the lid of his desk, making such preparations towards finishing off for the night, as pulling down his wristbands and pulling up his shirt-collar, settling his neck more gracefully in his stock, and secretly arranging his whiskers by the aid of a little triangular bit of looking-glass. Before the ashes of the fire, stood two gentlemen, one of whom she rightly judged to be the notary, and the other (who was buttoning his great-coat, and was evidently about to depart immediately) Mr. Abel Garland.

Having made these observations, the small spy took counsel with herself, and resolved to wait in the street until Mr. Abel came out, as there would be then no

fear of having to speak before Mr. Chuckster, and less difficulty in delivering her message. With this purpose she slipped out again, and, crossing the road, sat down upon a door-step just opposite.

She had hardly taken this position, when there came dancing up the street, with his legs all wrong, and his head everywhere by turns, a pony. This pony had a little phaeton behind him, and a man in it; but, neither man nor phaeton seemed to embarrass him in the least, as he reared up on his hind legs, or stopped, or went on, or stood still again, or backed, or went sideways, without the smallest reference to them, — just as the fancy seized him, and as if he were the freest animal in creation. When they came to the notary's door, the man called out in a very respectful manner, "Woa then," — intimating that if he might venture to express a wish, it would be that they stopped there. The pony made a moment's pause; but, as if it occurred to him that to stop when he was required might be to establish an inconvenient and dangerous precedent, he immediately started off again, rattled at a fast trot to the street-corner, wheeled round, came back, and then stopped of his own accord.

"Oh! you're a precious creatur!" said the man — who didn't venture by-the-by to come out in his true colors until he was safe on the pavement. "I wish I had the rewarding of you, — I do."

"What has he been doing?" said Mr. Abel, tying a shawl round his neck as he came down the steps.

"He's enough to fret a man's heart out," replied the hostler. "He is the most wicious rascal — woa then, will you?"

"He'll never stand still, if you call him names," said

Mr. Abel, getting in, and taking the reins. "He's a very good fellow if you know how to manage him. This is the first time he has been out, this long while, for he has lost his old driver and wouldn't stir for anybody else, till this morning. The lamps are right, are they? That's well. Be here to take him to-morrow, if you please. Good-night!"

And, after one or two strange plunges, quite of his own invention, the pony yielded to Mr. Abel's mildness, and trotted gently off.

All this time Mr. Chuckster had been standing at the door, and the small servant had been afraid to approach. She had nothing for it now, therefore, but to run after the chaise, and to call to Mr. Abel to stop. Being out of breath when she came up with it, she was unable to make him hear. The case was desperate; for the pony was quickening his pace. The Marchioness hung on behind for a few moments, and, feeling that she could go no farther, and must soon yield, clambered by a vigorous effort into the hinder seat, and in so doing lost one of the shoes forever.

Mr. Abel being in a thoughtful frame of mind, and having quite enough to do to keep the pony going, went jogging on without looking round: little dreaming of the strange figure that was close behind him, until the Marchioness, having in some degree recovered her breath, and the loss of her shoe, and the novelty of her position, uttered close into his ear, the words —

"I say, sir" —

He turned his head quickly enough then, and stopping the pony, cried, with some trepidation, "God bless me, what is this!"

"Don't be frightened, sir," replied the still pant-

ing messenger. "Oh I've run such a way after you!"

"What do you want with me?" said Mr. Abel. "How did you come here?"

"I got in behind," replied the Marchioness. "Oh please drive on, sir — don't stop — and go towards the city, will you? And oh do please make haste, because it's of consequence. There's somebody wants to see you there. He sent me to say would you come directly, and that he knowed all about Kit, and could save him yet, and prove his innocence."

"What do you tell me, child?"

"The truth, upon my word and honor I do. But please to drive on — quick, please! I've been such a time gone, he'll think I'm lost."

Mr. Abel involuntarily urged the pony forward. The pony, impelled by some secret sympathy or some new caprice, burst into a great pace, and neither slackened it, nor indulged in any eccentric performances, until they arrived at the door of Mr. Swiveller's lodging, where, marvellous to relate, he consented to stop when Mr. Abel checked him.

"See! It's that room up there," said the Marchioness, pointing to one where there was a faint light. "Come!"

Mr. Abel, who was one of the simplest and most retiring creatures in existence, and naturally timid withal, hesitated; for he had heard of people being decoyed into strange places to be robbed and murdered, under circumstances very like the present, and, for anything he knew to the contrary, by guides very like the Marchioness. His regard for Kit, however, overcame every other consideration. So, entrusting Whisker to

the charge of a man who was lingering hard by in expectation of the job, he suffered his companion to take his hand, and to lead him up the dark and narrow stairs.

He was not a little surprised to find himself conducted into a dimly-lighted sick chamber, where a man was sleeping tranquilly in bed.

"A'n't it nice to see him lying there so quiet?" said his guide, in an earnest whisper. "Oh! you'd say it was, if you had only seen him two or three days ago."

Mr. Abel made no answer, and, to say the truth, kept a long way from the bed and very near the door. His guide, who appeared to understand his reluctance, trimmed the candle, and taking it in her hand, approached the bed. As she did so, the sleeper started up, and he recognized in the wasted face the features of Richard Swiveller.

"Why, how is this?" said Mr. Abel kindly, as he hurried towards him. "You have been ill?"

"Very," replied Dick. "Nearly dead. You might have chanced to hear of your Richard on his bier, but for the friend I sent to fetch you. Another shake of the hand, Marchioness, if you please. Sit down, sir."

Mr. Abel seemed rather astonished to hear of the quality of his guide, and took a chair by the bedside.

"I have sent for you, sir," said Dick — "but she told you on what account?"

"She did. I am quite bewildered by all this. I really don't know what to say or think," replied Mr. Abel.

"You'll say that, presently," retorted Dick. "Mar-

chioness, take a seat on the bed, will you? Now, tell this gentleman all that you told me; and be particular. Don't you speak another word, sir."

The story was repeated; it was, in effect, exactly the same as before, without any deviation or omission. Richard Swiveller kept his eyes fixed on his visitor during its narration, and directly it was concluded, took the word again.

"You have heard it all, and you'll not forget it. I'm too giddy and too queer to suggest anything; but you and your friends will know what to do. After this long delay, every minute is an age. If ever you went home fast in your life, go home fast to-night. Don't stop to say one word to me, but go. She will be found here, whenever she's wanted; and as to me, you're pretty sure to find me at home, for a week or two. There are more reasons than one for that. Marchioness, a light! If you lose another minute in looking at me, sir, I'll never forgive you!"

Mr. Abel needed no more remonstrance or persuasion. He was gone in an instant; and the Marchioness, returning from lighting him down-stairs, reported that the pony, without any preliminary objection whatever, had dashed away at full gallop.

"That's right!" said Dick; "and hearty of him; and I honor him from this time. But get some supper and a mug of beer, for I am sure you must be tired. Do have a mug of beer. It will do me as much good to see you take it as if I might drink it myself."

Nothing but this assurance could have prevailed upon the small nurse to indulge in such a luxury. Having eaten and drunk to Mr. Swiveller's extreme contentment, given him his drink, and put everything in neat order,

she wrapped herself in an old coverlet and lay down upon the rug before the fire.

Mr. Swiveller was by that time murmuring in his sleep, "Strew then, oh strew, a bed of rushes. Here will we stay, till morning blushes. Good-night, Marchioness!"

CHAPTER LXVI.

On awaking in the morning, Richard Swiveller became conscious, by slow degrees, of whispering voices in his room. Looking out between the curtains, he espied Mr. Garland, Mr. Abel, the notary, and the single gentleman, gathered round the Marchioness, and talking to her with great earnestness but in very subdued tones — fearing, no doubt, to disturb him. He lost no time in letting them know that this precaution was unnecessary, and all four gentlemen directly approached his bedside. Old Mr. Garland was the first to stretch out his hand and inquire how he felt.

Dick was about to answer that he felt much better, though still as weak as need be, when his little nurse, pushing the visitors aside and pressing up to his pillow as if in jealousy of their interference, set his breakfast before him, and insisted on his taking it before he underwent the fatigue of speaking or of being spoken to. Mr. Swiveller who was perfectly ravenous, and had had, all night, amazingly distinct and consistent dreams of mutton-chops, double stout, and similar delicacies, felt even the weak tea and dry toast such irresistible temptations, that he consented to eat and drink on one condition.

"And that is," said Dick, returning the pressure of Mr. Garland's hand, "that you answer me this question truly, before I take a bit or drop. Is it too late?"

"For completing the work you began so well last night?" returned the old gentleman. "No. Set your mind at rest on that point. It is not, I assure you."

Comforted by this intelligence, the patient applied himself to his food with a keen appetite, though evidently not with a greater zest in the eating than his nurse appeared to have in seeing him eat. The manner of his meal was this: — Mr. Swiveller, holding the slice of toast or cup of tea in his left hand, and taking a bite or drink, as the case might be, constantly kept, in his right, one palm of the Marchioness tight locked; and to shake or even to kiss this imprisoned hand, he would stop every now and then, in the very act of swallowing, with perfect seriousness of intention, and the utmost gravity. As often as he put anything into his mouth, whether for eating or drinking, the face of the Marchioness lighted up beyond all description; but, whenever he gave her one or other of these tokens of recognition, her countenance became overshadowed, and she began to sob. Now, whether she was in her laughing joy, or in her crying one, the Marchioness could not help turning to the visitors with an appealing look, which seemed to say, "You see this fellow — can I help this?" — and they, being thus made, as it were, parties to the scene, as regularly answered by another look, "No. Certainly not." This dumb-show, taking place during the whole time of the invalid's breakfast, and the invalid himself, pale and emaciated, performing no small part in the same, it may be fairly questioned whether at any meal, where no word, good or bad, was spoken from beginning to end, so much was expressed by gestures in themselves so slight and unimportant.

At length — and to say the truth before very long —

Mr. Swiveller had dispatched as much toast and tea as in that stage of his recovery it was discreet to let him have. But, the cares of the Marchioness did not stop here; for, disappearing for an instant and presently returning with a basin of fair water, she laved his face and hands, brushed his hair, and in short made him as spruce and smart as anybody under such circumstances could be made; and all this, in as brisk and business-like a manner, as if he were a very little boy, and she his grown-up nurse. To these various attentions, Mr. Swiveller submitted in a kind of grateful astonishment beyond the reach of language. When they were at last brought to an end, and the Marchioness had withdrawn into a distant corner to take her own poor breakfast (cold enough by that time), he turned his face away for some few moments, and shook hands heartily with the air.

"Gentlemen," said Dick, rousing himself from this pause, and turning round again, "you'll excuse me. Men who have been brought so low as I have been, are easily fatigued. I am fresh again now, and fit for talking. We're short of chairs here, among other trifles, but if you'll do me the favor to sit upon the bed" ——

"What can we do for you?" said Mr. Garland kindly.

"If you could make the Marchioness yonder, a Marchioness, in real, sober earnest," returned Dick, "I'd thank you to get it done off-hand. But as you can't, and as the question is not what you will do for me, but what you will do for somebody else, who has a better claim upon you, pray sir let me know what you intend doing."

"It's chiefly on that account that we have come just now," said the single gentleman, "for you will have another visitor presently. We feared you would be anx-

ious unless you knew from ourselves what steps we intended to take, and therefore came to you before we stirred in the matter."

"Gentlemen," returned Dick, "I thank you. Anybody in the helpless state that you see me in, is naturally anxious. Don't let me interrupt you, sir."

"Then, you see, my good fellow," said the single gentleman, "that while we have no doubt whatever of the truth of this disclosure, which has so providentially come to light —"

"— Meaning hers?" said Dick, pointing towards the Marchioness.

"Meaning hers, of course. While we have no doubt of that, or that a proper use of it would procure the poor lad's immediate pardon and liberation, we have a great doubt whether it would, by itself, enable us to reach Quilp, the chief agent in this villany. I should tell you that this doubt has been confirmed into something very nearly approaching certainty by the best opinions we have been enabled, in this short space of time, to take upon the subject. You'll agree with us, that to give him even the most distant chance of escape, if we could help it, would be monstrous. You say with us, no doubt, if somebody must escape, let it be any one but he."

"Yes," returned Dick, "certainly. That is, if somebody *must* — but upon my word, I'm unwilling that anybody should. Since laws were made for every degree, to curb vice in others as well as in me — and so forth you know — doesn't it strike you in that light?"

The single gentleman smiled as if the light in which Mr. Swiveller had put the question were not the clearest in the world, and proceeded to explain that they

contemplated proceeding by stratagem in the first instance; and that their design was, to endeavor to extort a confession from the gentle Sarah.

"When she finds how much we know, and how we know it," he said, "and that she is clearly compromised already, we are not without strong hopes that we may be enabled through her means to punish the other two effectually. If we could do that, she might go scot-free for aught I cared."

Dick received this project in anything but a gracious manner, representing with as much warmth as he was then capable of showing, that they would find the old buck (meaning Sarah) more difficult to manage than Quilp himself — that, for any tampering, terrifying, or cajolery, she was a very unpromising and unyielding subject — that she was of a kind of brass not easily melted or moulded into shape — in short, that they were no match for her, and would be signally defeated. But, it was in vain to urge them to adopt some other course. The single gentleman has been described as explaining their joint intentions, but it should have been written that they all spoke together; that if any one of them by chance held his peace for a moment, he stood gasping and panting for an opportunity to strike in again; in a word, that they had reached that pitch of impatience and anxiety where men can neither be persuaded nor reasoned with; and that it would have been as easy to turn the most impetuous wind that ever blew, as to prevail on them to reconsider their determination. So, after telling Mr. Swiveller how they had not lost sight of Kit's mother and the children; how they had never once even lost sight of Kit himself, but had been unremitting in their endeavors to procure a mitigation of

his sentence; how they had been perfectly distracted between the strong proofs of his guilt, and their own fading hopes of his innocence; and how he, Richard Swiveller, might keep his mind at rest, for everything should be happily adjusted between that time and night; — after telling him all this, and adding a great many kind and cordial expressions, personal to himself, which it is unnecessary to recite, Mr. Garland, the notary, and the single gentleman, took their leaves at a very critical time, or Richard Swiveller must assuredly have been driven into another fever, whereof the results might have been fatal.

Mr. Abel remained behind, very often looking at his watch and at the room door, until Mr. Swiveller was roused from a short nap, by the setting-down on the landing-place outside, as from the shoulders of a porter, of some giant load, which seemed to shake the house, and make the little physic bottles on the mantel-shelf ring again. Directly this sound reached his ears, Mr. Abel started up, and hobbled to the door, and opened it; and behold! there stood a strong man, with a mighty hamper, which, being hauled into the room and presently unpacked, disgorged such treasures of tea, and coffee, and wine, and rusks, and oranges, and grapes, and fowls ready trussed for boiling, and calves'-foot jelly, and arrow-root, and sago, and other delicate restoratives, that the small servant who had never thought it possible that such things could be, except in shops, stood rooted to the spot in her one shoe, with her mouth and eyes watering in unison, and her power of speech quite gone. But, not so Mr. Abel; or the strong man who emptied the hamper, big as it was, in a twinkling; and not so the nice old lady, who appeared so suddenly that she

might have come out of the hamper too (it was quite large enough), and who bustling about on tiptoe and without noise — now here, now there, now everywhere at once — began to fill out the jelly in teacups, and to make chicken broth in small saucepans, and to peal oranges for the sick man and to cut them up in little pieces, and to ply the small servant with glasses of wine and choice bits of everything until more substantial meat could be prepared for her refreshment. The whole of which appearances were so unexpected and bewildering, that Mr. Swiveller when he had taken two oranges and a little jelly, and had seen the strong man walk off with the empty basket, plainly leaving all that abundance for his use and benefit, was fain to lie down and fall asleep again, from sheer inability to entertain such wonders in his mind.

Meanwhile the single gentleman, the notary, and Mr. Garland, repaired to a certain coffee-house, and from that place indited and sent a letter to Miss Sally Brass, requesting her, in terms mysterious and brief, to favor an unknown friend who wished to consult her, with her company there, as speedily as possible. The communication performed its errand so well, that within ten minutes of the messenger's return and report of its delivery, Miss Brass herself was announced.

"Pray ma'am," said the single gentleman, whom she found alone in the room, "take a chair."

Miss Brass sat herself down in a very stiff and frigid state, and seemed — as indeed she was — not a little astonished to find that the lodger and her mysterious correspondent were one and the same person.

"You did not expect to see me?" said the single gentleman.

"I didn't think much about it," returned the beauty. "I supposed it was business of some kind or other. If it's about the apartments, of course you'll give my brother regular notice, you know — or money. That's very easily settled. You're a responsible party, and in such a case lawful money and lawful notice are pretty much the same."

"I am obliged to you for your good opinion," retorted the single gentleman, "and quite concur in those sentiments. But, that is not the subject on which I wish to speak with you."

"Oh!" said Sally. "Then just state the particulars, will you? I suppose it's professional business?"

"Why it *is* connected with the law, certainly."

"Very well," returned Miss Brass. "My brother and I are just the same. I can take any instructions or give you any advice."

"As there are other parties interested besides myself," said the single gentleman, rising and opening the door of an inner room, "we had better confer together. Miss Brass is here, gentlemen!"

Mr. Garland and the Notary walked in, looking very grave: and, drawing up two chairs, one on each side of the single gentleman, formed a kind of fence round the gentle Sarah, and penned her into a corner. Her brother Sampson under such circumstances would certainly have evinced some confusion or anxiety, but she — all composure — pulled out the tin box and calmly took a pinch of snuff.

"Miss Brass," said the Notary, taking the word at this crisis, "we professional people understand each other, and, when we choose, can say what we have to say, in very few words. You advertised a runaway servant, the other day?"

"Well," returned Miss Sally, with a sudden flush overspreading her features, "what of that?"

"She is found, ma'am," said the Notary, pulling out his pocket-handkerchief with a flourish. "She is found."

"Who found her?" demanded Sarah hastily.

"We did ma'am — we three. Only last night, or you would have heard from us before."

"And now I *have* heard from you," said Miss Brass, folding her arms as though she were about to deny something to the death, "what have you got to say? Something you have got into your heads about her, of course. Prove it, will you — that's all. Prove it. You have found her, you say. I can tell you (if you don't know it) that you have found the most artful, lying, pilfering, devilish little minx that was ever born. — Have you got her here?" she added, looking sharply round.

"No, she is not here at present," returned the Notary. "But she is quite safe."

"Ha!" cried Sally, twitching a pinch of snuff out of her box, as spitefully as if she were in the very act of wrenching off the small servant's nose; "she shall be safe enough from this time, I warrant you."

"I hope so," replied the Notary. — "Did it occur to you for the first time, when you found she had run away, that there were two keys to your kitchen door?"

Miss Sally took another pinch, and, putting her head on one side, looked at her questioner, with a curious kind of spasm about her mouth, but with a cunning aspect of immense expression.

"Two keys," repeated the Notary; "one of which gave her the opportunities of roaming through the house at nights when you supposed her fast locked up, and of

overhearing confidential consultations — among others, that particular conference, to be described to-day before a justice, which you will have an opportunity of hearing her relate; that conference which you and Mr. Brass held together, on the night before that most unfortunate and innocent young man was accused of robbery, by a horrible device of which I will only say that it may be characterized by the epithets you have applied to this wretched little witness, and by a few stronger ones besides."

Sally took another pinch. Although her face was wonderfully composed, it was apparent that she was wholly taken by surprise, and that what she had expected to be taxed with, in connection with her small servant, was something very different from this.

"Come, come, Miss Brass," said the Notary, "you have great command of feature, but you feel, I see, that by a chance which never entered your imagination, this base design is revealed, and two of its plotters must be brought to justice. Now, you know the pains and penalties you are liable to, and so I need not dilate upon them, but I have a proposal to make to you. You have the honor of being sister to one of the greatest scoundrels unhung; and, if I may venture to say so to a lady, you are in every respect quite worthy of him. But, connected with you two is a third party, a villain of the name of Quilp, the prime mover of the whole diabolical device, who I believe to be worse than either. For his sake, Miss Brass, do us the favor to reveal the whole history of this affair. Let me remind you that your doing so, at our instance, will place you in a safe and comfortable position — your present one is not desirable — and cannot injure your brother; for against him and

you we have quite sufficient evidence (as you hear) already. I will not say to you that we suggest this course in mercy (for, to tell you the truth, we do not entertain any regard for you), but it is a necessity to which we are reduced, and I recommend it to you as a matter of the very best policy. Time," said Mr. Witherden, pulling out his watch, "in a business like this, is exceedingly precious. Favor us with your decision as speedily as possible, ma'am."

With a smile upon her face, and looking at each of the three by turns, Miss Brass took two or three more pinches of snuff, and having by this time very little left, travelled round and round the box with her forefinger and thumb, scraping up another. Having disposed of this likewise and put the box carefully in her pocket, she said, —

"I am to accept or reject at once, am I?"

"Yes," said Mr. Witherden.

The charming creature was opening her lips to speak in reply, when the door was hastily opened too, and the head of Sampson Brass was thrust into the room.

"Excuse me," said that gentleman, hastily. "Wait a bit!"

So saying, and quite indifferent to the astonishment his presence occasioned, he crept in, shut the door, kissed his greasy glove as servilely as if it were the dust, and made a most abject bow.

"Sarah," said Brass, "hold your tongue if you please, and let me speak. Gentlemen, if I could express the pleasure it gives me to see three such men in a happy unity of feeling and concord of sentiment, I think you would hardly believe me. But though I am unfortunate — nay, gentlemen, criminal, if we are to use harsh ex-

pressions in a company like this — still, I have my feelings like other men. I have heard of a poet, who remarked that feelings were the common lot of all. If he could have been a pig, gentlemen, and have uttered that sentiment, he would still have been immortal."

"If you're not an idiot," said Miss Brass harshly, "hold your peace."

"Sarah, my dear," returned her brother, "thank you. But I know what I am about, my love, and will take the liberty of expressing myself accordingly. Mr. Witherden, sir, your handkerchief is hanging out of your pocket — would you allow me to" —

As Mr. Brass advanced to remedy this accident, the Notary shrunk from him with an air of disgust. Brass, who over and above his usual prepossessing qualities, had a scratched face, a green shade over one eye, and a hat grievously crushed, stopped short, and looked round with a pitiful smile.

"He shuns me," said Sampson, "even when I would, as I may say, heap coals of fire upon his head. Well! Ah! But I am a falling house, and the rats (if I may be allowed the expression in reference to a gentleman I respect and love beyond everything) fly from me! Gentlemen — regarding your conversation just now, I happened to see my sister on her way here, and, wondering where she could be going to, and being — may I venture to say? — naturally of a suspicious turn, followed her. Since then, I have been listening."

"If you're not mad," interposed Miss Sally, "stop there, and say no more."

"Sarah, my dear," rejoined Brass with undiminished politeness, "I thank you kindly, but will still proceed. Mr. Witherden, sir, as we have the honor to be members

of the same profession — to say nothing of that other gentleman having been my lodger, and having partaken, as one may say, of the hospitality of my roof — I think you might have given me the refusal of this offer in the first instance. I do indeed. Now, my dear sir," cried Brass, seeing that the Notary was about to interrupt him, "suffer me to speak, I beg."

Mr. Witherden was silent, and Brass went on.

"If you will do me the favor," he said, holding up the green shade, and revealing an eye most horribly discolored, "to look at this, you will naturally inquire, in your own minds, how did I get it. If you look from that, to my face, you will wonder what could have been the cause of all these scratches. And if from them to my hat, how it came into the state in which you see it. Gentlemen," said Brass, striking the hat fiercely with his clenched hand, "to all these questions I answer — Quilp!"

The three gentlemen looked at each other, but said nothing.

"I say," pursued Brass, glancing aside at his sister, as though he were talking for her information, and speaking with a snarling malignity, in violent contrast to his usual smoothness, "that I answer to all these questions, — Quilp — Quilp, who deludes me into his infernal den, and takes a delight in looking on and chuckling while I scorch, and burn, and bruise, and maim myself — Quilp, who never once, no never once, in all our communications together, has treated me otherwise than as a dog — Quilp, whom I have always hated with my whole heart, but never so much as lately. He gives me the cold shoulder on this very matter as if he had had nothing to do with it, instead of being the first to propose it. I

can't trust him. In one of his howling, raving, blazing humors, I believe he'd let it out, if it was murder, and never think of himself so long as he could terrify me. Now," said Brass, picking up his hat again, replacing the shade over his eye, and actually crouching down, in the excess of his servility, " what does all this lead me to? — what should you say it led me to, gentlemen? — could you guess at all near the mark?"

Nobody spoke. Brass stood smirking for a little while, as if he had propounded some choice conundrum; and then said, —

" To be short with you, then, it leads me to this. If the truth has come out, as it plainly has in a manner that there's no standing up against — and a very sublime and grand thing is Truth, gentlemen, in its way, though like other sublime and grand things, such as thunder-storms and that, we're not always over and above glad to see it — I had better turn upon this man than let this man turn upon me. It's clear to me that I am done for. Therefore, if anybody is to split, I had better be the person and have the advantage of it. Sarah, my dear, comparatively speaking you're safe. I relate these circumstances for my own profit."

With that, Mr. Brass, in a great hurry, revealed the whole story; bearing as heavily as possible on his amiable employer, and making himself out to be rather a saint-like and holy character, though subject — he acknowledged — to human weaknesses. He concluded thus, —

" Now, gentlemen, I am not a man who does things by halves. Being in for a penny, I am ready, as the saying is, to be in for a pound. You must do with me what you please, and take me where you please.

If you wish to have this in writing, we'll reduce it into manuscript immediately. You will be tender with me, I am sure. I am quite confident you will be tender with me. You are men of honor, and have feeling hearts. I yielded from necessity to Quilp, for though necessity has no law, she has her lawyers. I yield to you from necessity too; from policy besides; and because of feelings that have been a pretty long time working within me. Punish Quilp, gentlemen. Weigh heavily upon him. Grind him down. Tread him under foot. He has done as much by me, for many and many a day."

Having now arrived at the conclusion of his discourse, Sampson checked the current of his wrath, kissed his glove again, and smiled as only parasites and cowards can.

"And this," said Miss Brass, raising her head, with which she had hitherto sat resting on her hands, and surveying him from head to foot with a bitter sneer, "this is my brother, is it! This is my brother, that I have worked and toiled for, and believed to have had something of the man in him!"

"Sarah, my dear," returned Sampson, rubbing his hands feebly; "you disturb our friends. Besides you — you're disappointed, Sarah, and, not knowing what you say, expose yourself."

"Yes, you pitiful dastard," retorted the lovely damsel, "I understand you. You feared that I should be beforehand with you. But do you think that *I* would have been enticed to say a word! I'd have scorned it, if they had tried and tempted me for twenty years."

"He, he!" simpered Brass, who, in his deep debasement, really seemed to have changed sexes with his

sister, and to have made over to her any spark of manliness he might have possessed. "You think so, Sarah, you think so perhaps; but you would have acted quite different, my good fellow. You will not have forgotten that it was a maxim with Foxey — our revered father, gentlemen — 'Always suspect everybody.' That's the maxim to go through life with! If you were not actually about to purchase your own safety when I showed myself, I suspect you'd have done it by this time. And therefore I've done it myself, and spared you the trouble as well as the shame. The shame, gentlemen," added Brass, allowing himself to be slightly overcome, "if there is any, is mine. It's better that a female should be spared it."

With deference to the better opinion of Mr. Brass, and more particularly to the authority of his great ancestor, it may be doubted, with humility, whether the elevating principle laid down by the latter gentleman, and acted upon by his descendant, is always a prudent one, or attended in practice with the desired results. This is, beyond question, a bold and presumptuous doubt, inasmuch as many distinguished characters, called men of the world, long-headed customers, knowing dogs, shrewd fellows, capital hands at business, and the like, have made, and do daily make, this axiom their polar star and compass. Still, the doubt may be gently insinuated. And in illustration it may be observed that if Mr. Brass, not being over-suspicious, had, without prying and listening, left his sister to manage the conference on their joint behalf, or, prying and listening, had not been in such a mighty hurry to anticipate her (which he would not have been, but for his distrust and jealousy), he would probably have found himself much

better off in the end. Thus, it will always happen that these men of the world, who go through it in armor, defend themselves from quite as much good as evil; to say nothing of the inconvenience and absurdity of mounting guard with a microscope at all times, and of wearing a coat of mail on the most innocent occasions.

The three gentlemen spoke together apart, for a few moments. At the end of their consultation, which was very brief, the Notary pointed to the writing materials on the table, and informed Mr. Brass that if he wished to make any statement in writing, he had the opportunity of doing so. At the same time he felt bound to tell him that they would require his attendance, presently, before a justice of the peace, and that in what he did or said, he was guided entirely by his own discretion.

"Gentlemen," said Brass, drawing off his gloves, and crawling in spirit upon the ground before them, "I will justify the tenderness with which I know I shall be treated; and as, without tenderness, I should, now that this discovery has been made, stand in the worst position of the three, you may depend upon it I will make a clean breast. Mr. Witherden, sir, a kind of faintness is upon my spirits — if you would do me the favor to ring the bell and order up a glass of something warm and spicy, I shall, notwithstanding what has passed have a melancholy pleasure in drinking your good health. I had hoped," said Brass, looking round with a mournful smile, "to have seen you three gentlemen, one day or another, with your legs under the mahogany in my humble parlor in the Marks. But hopes are fleeting. Dear me!"

Mr. Brass found himself so exceedingly affected, at this point, that he could say or do nothing more until

some refreshment arrived. Having partaken of it, pretty freely for one in his agitated state, he sat down to write.

The lovely Sarah, now with her arms folded, and now with her hands clasped behind her, paced the room with many strides, while her brother was thus employed, and sometimes stopped to pull out her snuff-box and bite the lid. She continued to pace up and down until she was quite tired, and then fell asleep on a chair near the door.

It has been since supposed, with some reason, that this slumber was a sham or feint, as she contrived to slip away unobserved in the dusk of the afternoon. Whether this was an intentional and waking departure, or a somnambulistic leave-taking and walking in her sleep, may remain a subject of contention; but, on one point (and indeed the main one) all parties are agreed. In whatever state she walked away, she certainly did not walk back again.

Mention having been made of the dusk of the afternoon, it will be inferred that Mr. Brass's task occupied some time in the completion. It was not finished until evening; but, being done at last, that worthy person and the three friends adjourned in a hackney-coach to the private office of a justice, who, giving Mr. Brass a warm reception and detaining him in a secure place that he might insure to himself the pleasure of seeing him on the morrow, dismissed the others with the cheering assurance that a warrant could not fail to be granted next day for the apprehension of Mr. Quilp, and that a proper application and statement of all the circumstances to the secretary of state (who was fortunately in town), would no doubt procure Kit's free pardon and liberation without delay.

And now, indeed, it seemed that Quilp's malignant career was drawing to a close, and that retribution, which often travels slowly — especially when heaviest — had tracked his footsteps with a sure and certain scent, and was gaining on him fast. Unmindful of her stealthy tread, her victim holds his course in fancied triumph. Still at his heels she comes, and once afoot, is never turned aside!

Their business ended, the three gentlemen hastened back to the lodgings of Mr. Swiveller, whom they found progressing so favorably in his recovery as to have been able to sit up for half an hour, and to have conversed with cheerfulness. Mrs. Garland had gone home some time since, but Mr. Abel was still sitting with him. After telling him all they had done, the two Mr. Garlands and the single gentleman, as if by some previous understanding, took their leaves for the night, leaving the invalid alone with the Notary and the small servant.

"As you are so much better," said Mr. Witherden, sitting down at the bedside, "I may venture to communicate to you a piece of news which has come to me professionally."

The idea of any professional intelligence from a gentleman connected with legal matters, appeared to afford Richard anything but a pleasing anticipation. Perhaps he connected it in his own mind with one or two outstanding accounts, in reference to which he had already received divers threatening letters. His countenance fell as he replied, —

"Certainly, sir. I hope it's not anything of a very disagreeable nature, though?"

"If I thought it so, I should choose some better time

for communicating it," replied the Notary. "Let me tell you, first, that my friends who have been here to-day know nothing of it, and that their kindness to you has been quite spontaneous and with no hope of return. It may do a thoughtless, careless man, good, to know that."

Dick thanked him, and said he hoped it would.

"I have been making some inquiries about you," said Mr. Witherden, "little thinking that I should find you under such circumstances as those which have brought us together. You are the nephew of Rebecca Swiveller, spinster, deceased, of Cheselbourne in Dorsetshire."

"Deceased!" cried Dick.

"Deceased. If you had been another sort of nephew, you would have come into possession (so says the will, and I see no reason to doubt it) of five-and-twenty thousand pounds. As it is, you have fallen into an annuity of one hundred and fifty pounds a year; but I think I may congratulate you even upon that."

"Sir," said Dick, sobbing and laughing together, "you may. For, please God, we'll make a scholar of the poor Marchioness yet! And she shall walk in silk attire, and siller have to spare, or may I never rise from this bed again!"

CHAPTER LXVII.

Unconscious of the proceedings faithfully narrated in the last chapter, and little dreaming of the mine which had been sprung beneath him (for, to the end that he should have no warning of the business a-foot, the profoundest secrecy was observed in the whole transaction), Mr. Quilp remained shut up in his hermitage, undisturbed by any suspicion, and extremely well satisfied with the result of his machinations. Being engaged in the adjustment of some accounts — an occupation to which the silence and solitude of his retreat were very favorable — he had not strayed from his den for two whole days. The third day of his devotion to this pursuit found him still hard at work, and little disposed to stir abroad.

It was the day next after Mr. Brass's confession, and, consequently, that which threatened the restriction of Mr. Quilp's liberty, and the abrupt communication to him of some very unpleasant and unwelcome facts. Having no intuitive perception of the cloud which lowered upon his house, the dwarf was in his ordinary state of cheerfulness; and, when he found he was becoming too much engrossed by business with a due regard to his health and spirits, he varied its monotonous routine with a little screeching, or howling, or some other innocent relaxation of that nature.

He was attended, as usual, by Tom Scott, who sat crouching over the fire after the manner of a toad, and, from time to time, when his master's back was turned, imitated his grimaces with a fearful exactness. The figure-head had not yet disappeared, but remained in its old place. The face, horribly seared by the frequent application of the red-hot poker, and further ornamented by the insertion, in the tip of the nose, of a tenpenny nail, yet smiled blandly in its less lacerated parts, and seemed, like a sturdy martyr, to provoke its tormentor to the commission of new outrages and insults.

The day, in the highest and brightest quarters of the town, was damp, dark, cold, and gloomy. In that low and marshy spot, the fog filled every nook and corner with a thick dense cloud. Every object was obscured at one or two yards' distance. The warning lights and fires upon the river were powerless beneath this pall, and, but for a raw and piercing chillness in the air, and now and then the cry of some bewildered boatman as he rested on his oars and tried to make out where he was, the river itself might have been miles away.

The mist, though sluggish and slow to move, was of a keenly searching kind. No muffling up in furs and broadcloth kept it out. It seemed to penetrate into the very bones of the shrinking wayfarers, and to rack them with cold and pains. Everything was wet, and clammy to the touch. The warm blaze alone defied it, and leaped and sparkled merrily. It was a day to be at home, crowding about the fire, telling stories of travellers who had lost their way in such weather on heaths and moors; and to love a warm hearth more than ever.

The dwarf's humor, as we know, was to have a fireside to himself; and when he was disposed to be convivial, to enjoy himself alone. By no means insensible to the comfort of being within doors, he ordered Tom Scott to pile the little stove with coals, and, dismissing his work for that day, determined to be jovial.

To this end, he lighted up fresh candles and heaped more fuel on the fire; and having dined off a beefsteak, which he cooked himself in somewhat of a savage and cannibal-like manner, brewed a great bowl of hot punch, lighted his pipe, and sat down to spend the evening.

At this moment, a low knocking at the cabin-door arrested his attention. When it had been twice or thrice repeated, he softly opened the little window, and thrusting his head out, demanded who was there.

"Only me Quilp," replied a woman's voice.

"Only you!" cried the dwarf, stretching his neck to obtain a better view of his visitor. "And what brings you here, you jade? How dare you approach the ogre's castle, eh?"

"I have come with some news," rejoined his spouse. "Don't be angry with me."

"Is it good news, pleasant news, news to make a man skip and snap his fingers?" said the dwarf. "Is the dear old lady dead?"

"I don't know what news it is, or whether it's good or bad," rejoined his wife.

"Then she's alive," said Quilp, "and there's nothing the matter with her. Go home again, you bird of evil note, go home!"

"I have brought a letter" — cried the meek little woman.

"Toss it in at the window here, and go your ways," said Quilp, interrupting her, "or I'll come out and scratch you."

"No, but please, Quilp — do hear me speak," urged his submissive wife, in tears. "Please do!"

"Speak then," growled the dwarf, with a malicious grin. "Be quick and short about it. Speak, will you?"

"It was left at our house this afternoon," said Mrs. Quilp, trembling, "by a boy who said he didn't know from whom it came, but that it was given to him to leave, and that he was told to say it must be brought on to you directly, for it was of the very greatest consequence. — But please," she added, as her husband stretched out his hand for it, "please let me in. You don't know how wet and cold I am, or how many times I have lost my way in coming here through this thick fog. Let me dry myself at the fire for five minutes. I'll go away directly you tell me to, Quilp. Upon my word I will."

Her amiable husband hesitated for a few moments; but, bethinking himself that the letter might require some answer, of which she could be the bearer, closed the window, opened the door, and bade her enter. Mrs. Quilp obeyed right willingly, and, kneeling down before the fire to warm her hands, delivered into his, a little packet.

"I'm glad you're wet," said Quilp, snatching it, and squinting at her. "I'm glad you're cold. I'm glad you've lost your way. I'm glad your eyes are red with crying. It does my heart good to see your little nose so pinched and frosty."

"Oh Quilp!" sobbed his wife. "How cruel it is of you!"

"Did she think I was dead!" said Quilp, wrinkling his face into a most extraordinary series of grimaces. "Did she think she was going to have all the money, and to marry somebody she liked? Ha, ha, ha! Did she?"

These taunts elicited no reply from the poor little woman, who remained on her knees, warming her hands and sobbing, to Mr. Quilp's great delight. But, just as he was contemplating her, and chuckling excessively, he happened to observe that Tom Scott was delighted too; wherefore, that he might have no presumptuous partner in his glee, the dwarf instantly collared him, dragged him to the door, and after a short scuffle, kicked him into the yard. In return for this mark of attention, Tom immediately walked upon his hands to the window, and — if the expression be allowable — looked in with his shoes: besides rattling his feet upon the glass like a Banshee upside down. As a matter of course, Mr. Quilp lost no time in resorting to the infallible poker, with which, after some dodging and lying in ambush, he paid his young friend one or two such unequivocal compliments that he vanished precipitately, and left him in quiet possession of the field.

"So! That little job being disposed of," said the dwarf, coolly, "I'll read my letter. Humph!" he muttered, looking at the direction. "I ought to know this writing. Beautiful Sally!"

Opening it, he read, in a fair, round, legal hand, as follows: —

"Sammy has been practised upon, and has broken confidence. It has all come out. You had better not be in the way, for strangers are going to call upon you. They have been very quiet as yet, because they mean to

surprise you. Don't lose time. I didn't. I am not to be found anywhere. If I was you, I wouldn't be, either. S. B., late of B. M."

To describe the changes that passed over Quilp's face, as he read this letter half a dozen times, would require some new language: such, for power of expression, as was never written, read, or spoken. For a long time he did not utter one word: but, after a considerable interval, during which Mrs. Quilp was almost paralyzed with the alarm his looks engendered, he contrived to gasp out, —

— "If I had him here. If I only had him here" ——

"Oh Quilp!" said his wife, "what's the matter? Who are you angry with?"

"I should drown him," said the dwarf, not heeding her. "Too easy a death, too short, too quick — but the river runs close at hand. Oh! If I had him here! Just to take him to the brink, coaxingly and pleasantly, — holding him by the button-hole — joking with him, — and, with a sudden push, to send him splashing down! Drowning men come to the surface three times they say. Ah! To see him those three times, and mock him as his face came bobbing up, — oh, what a rich treat that would be!"

"Quilp!" stammered his wife, venturing at the same time to touch him on the shoulder: "what has gone wrong?"

She was so terrified by the relish with which he pictured this pleasure to himself, that she could scarcely make herself intelligible.

"Such a bloodless cur!" said Quilp, rubbing his hands very slowly, and pressing them tight together.

"I thought his cowardice and servility were the best guarantee for his keeping silence. Oh Brass, Brass — my dear, good, affectionate, faithful, complimentary, charming friend — if I only had you here!"

His wife, who had retreated lest she should seem to listen to these mutterings, ventured to approach him again, and was about to speak, when he hurried to the door and called Tom Scott, who, remembering his late gentle admonition, deemed it prudent to appear immediately.

"There!" said the dwarf, pulling him in. "Take her home. Don't come here to-morrow, for this place will be shut up. Come back no more till you hear from me or see me. Do you mind?"

Tom nodded sulkily, and beckoned Mrs. Quilp to lead the way.

"As for you," said the dwarf, addressing himself to her, "ask no questions about me, make no search for me, say nothing concerning me. I shall not be dead, mistress, and that'll comfort you. He'll take care of you."

"But Quilp? What is the matter? Where are you going? Do say something more."

"I'll say that," said the dwarf, seizing her by the arm, "and do that too, which undone and unsaid would be best for you, unless you go directly."

"Has anything happened?" cried his wife. "Oh! Do tell me that."

"Yes," snarled the dwarf. "No. What matter which? I have told you what to do. Woe betide you if you fail to do it, or disobey me by a hair's breadth. Will you go!"

"I am going, I'll go directly; but," faltered his wife, "answer me one question first. Has this letter any con-

nection with dear little Nell? I must ask you that — I must indeed, Quilp. You cannot think what days and nights of sorrow I have had through having once deceived that child. I don't know what harm I may have brought about, but, great or little, I did it for you, Quilp. My conscience misgave me when I did it. Do answer me this question, if you please."

The exasperated dwarf returned no answer, but turned round and caught up his usual weapon with such vehemence, that Tom Scott dragged his charge away, by main force, and as swiftly as he could. It was well he did so, for Quilp, who was nearly mad with rage, pursued them to the neighboring lane, and might have prolonged the chase but for the dense mist which obscured them from his view, and appeared to thicken every moment.

"It will be a good night for travelling anonymously," he said, as he returned slowly: being pretty well breathed with his run. "Stay. We may look better here. This is too hospitable and free."

By a great exertion of strength he closed the two old gates, which were deeply sunken in the mud, and barred them with a heavy beam. That done, he shook his matted hair from about his eyes, and tried them. — Strong and fast.

"The fence between this wharf and the next is easily climbed," said the dwarf, when he had taken these precautions. "There's a back lane, too, from there. That shall be my way out. A man need know his road well, to find it in this lovely place to-night. I need fear no unwelcome visitors while this lasts, I think."

Almost reduced to the necessity of groping his way with his hands (it had grown so dark and the fog had so

much increased), he returned to his lair; and, after musing for some time over the fire, busied himself in preparations for a speedy departure.

While he was collecting a few necessaries and cramming them into his pockets, he never once ceased communing with himself in a low voice, or unclenching his teeth: which he had ground together on finishing Miss Brass's note.

"Oh Sampson!" he muttered, "good, worthy creature — if I could but hug you! If I could only fold you in my arms, and squeeze your ribs, as I *could* squeeze them if I once had you tight — what a meeting there would be between us! If we ever do cross each other again, Sampson, we'll have a greeting not easily to be forgotten, trust me. This time, Sampson, this moment when all had gone on so well, was so nicely chosen! It was so thoughtful of you, so penitent, so good. Oh, if we were face to face in this room again, my white-livered man of law, how well contented one of us would be!"

There he stopped; and raising the bowl of punch to his lips, drank a long deep draught, as if it were fair water and cooling to his parched mouth. Setting it down abruptly, and resuming his preparations, he went on with his soliloquy.

"There's Sally," he said, with flashing eyes; "the woman has spirit, determination, purpose — was she asleep, or petrified? She could have stabbed him — poisoned him safely. She might have seen this, coming on. Why does she give me notice when it's too late? When he sat there, — yonder there, over there, — with his white face, and red head, and sickly smile, why didn't I know what was passing in his heart? It should have

stopped beating, that night, if I had been in his secret, or there are no drugs to lull a man to sleep, and no fire to burn him!"

Another draught from the bowl; and, cowering over the fire with a ferocious aspect, he muttered to himself again.

"And this, like every other trouble and anxiety I have had of late times, springs from that old dotard and his darling child — two wretched feeble wanderers! I'll be their evil genius yet. And you, sweet Kit, honest Kit, virtuous, innocent Kit, look to yourself. Where I hate, I bite. I hate you, my darling fellow, with good cause, and proud as you are to-night, I'll have my turn. — What's that!"

A knocking at the gate he had closed. A loud and violent knocking. Then, a pause; as if those who knocked, had stopped to listen. Then, the noise again, more clamorous and importunate than before.

"So soon!" said the dwarf. "And so eager! I am afraid I shall disappoint you. It's well I am quite prepared. Sally, I thank you!"

As he spoke, he extinguished the candle. In his impetuous attempts to subdue the brightness of the fire, he overset the stove, which came tumbling forward, and fell with a crash upon the burning embers it had shot forth in its descent, leaving the room in pitchy darkness. The noise at the gate still continuing, he felt his way to the door, and stepped into the open air.

At that moment the knocking ceased. It was about eight o'clock; but the dead of the darkest night would have been as noon-day, in comparison with the thick cloud which then rested upon the earth, and shrouded everything from view. He darted forward for a few paces, as

if into the mouth of some dim, yawning cavern; then, thinking he had gone wrong, changed the direction of his steps; then, stood still, not knowing where to turn.

"If they would knock again," said Quilp, trying to peer into the gloom by which he was surrounded, "the sound might guide me! Come! Batter the gate once more!"

He stood listening intently, but the noise was not renewed. Nothing was to be heard in that deserted place, but, at intervals, the distant barkings of dogs. The sound was far away — now in one quarter, now answered in another — nor was it any guide, for it often came from shipboard, as he knew.

"If I could find a wall or fence," said the dwarf, stretching out his arms, and walking slowly on, "I should know which way to turn. A good, black, devil's night this, to have my dear friend here! If I had but that wish, it might, for anything I cared, never be day again."

As the word passed his lips, he staggered and fell — and next moment was fighting with the cold dark water!

For all its bubbling up and rushing in his ears, he could hear the knocking at the gate again — could hear a shout that followed it — could recognize the voice. For all his struggling and plashing, he could understand that they had lost their way, and had wandered back to the point from which they started; that they were all but looking on, while he was drowned; that they were close at hand, but could not make an effort to save him; that he himself had shut and barred them out. He answered the shout — with a yell, which seemed to make the hundred fires that danced before his eyes, tremble and flicker as if a gust of wind had stirred them. It was of no avail.

The strong tide filled his throat, and bore him on, upon its rapid current.

Another mortal struggle, and he was up again, beating the water with his hands, and looking out, with wild and glaring eyes that showed him some black object he was drifting close upon. The hull of a ship! He could touch its smooth and slippery surface with his hand. One loud cry now — but the resistless water bore him down before he could give it utterance, and, driving him under, it carried away a corpse.

It toyed and sported with its ghastly freight, now bruising it against the slimy piles, now hiding it in mud or long rank grass, now dragging it heavily over rough stones and gravel, now feigning to yield it to its own element, and in the same action luring it away, until, tired of the ugly plaything, it flung it on a swamp — a dismal place where pirates had swung in chains, through many a wintry night — and left it there to bleach.

And there it lay, alone. The sky was red with flame, and the water that bore it there had been tinged with the sullen light as it flowed along. The place, the deserted carcass had left so recently, a living man, was now a blazing ruin. There was something of the glare upon its face. The hair, stirred by the damp breeze, played in a kind of mockery of death — such a mockery as the dead man himself would have delighted in when alive — about its head, and its dress fluttered idly in the night wind.

CHAPTER LXVIII.

LIGHTED rooms, bright fires, cheerful faces, the music of glad voices, words of love and welcome, warm hearts, and tears of happiness — what a change is this! But it is to such delights that Kit is hastening. They are awaiting him, he knows. He fears he will die of joy, before he gets among them.

They have prepared him for this, all day. He is not to be carried off to-morrow with the rest, they tell him first. By degrees they let him know that doubts have arisen, that inquiries are to be made, and perhaps he may be pardoned after all. At last, the evening being come, they bring him to a room where some gentlemen are assembled. Foremost among them is his good old master, who comes and takes him by the hand. He hears that his innocence is established, and that he is pardoned. He cannot see the speaker, but he turns towards the voice, and in trying to answer, falls down insensible.

They recover him again, and tell him he must be composed, and bear this like a man. Somebody says he must think of his poor mother. It is because he does think of her so much, that the happy news has overpowered him. They crowd about him, and tell him that the truth has gone abroad, and that all the town and country ring with sympathy for his misfortunes. He has no ears for this. His thoughts, as yet, have no wider

range than home. Does *she* know it? what did she say? who told her? He can speak of nothing else.

They make him drink a little wine, and talk kindly to him for a while, until he is more collected, and can listen, and thank them. He is free to go. Mr. Garland thinks, if he feels better, it is time they went away. The gentlemen cluster round him, and shake hands with him. He feels very grateful to them for the interest they have in him, and for the kind promises they make; but the power of speech is gone again, and he has much ado to keep his feet, even though leaning on his master's arm.

As they come through the dismal passages, some officers of the jail who are in waiting there, congratulate him, in their rough way, on his release. The newsmonger is of the number, but his manner is not quite hearty — there is something of surliness in his compliments. He looks upon Kit as an intruder, as one who has obtained admission to that place on false pretences, who has enjoyed a privilege without being duly qualified. He may be a very good sort of young man, he thinks, but he has no business there, and the sooner he is gone the better.

The last door shuts behind them. They have passed the outer wall, and stand in the open air — in the street he has so often pictured to himself when hemmed in by the gloomy stones, and which has been in all his dreams. It seems wider and more busy than it used to be. The night is bad, and yet how cheerful and gay in his eyes! One of the gentlemen, in taking leave of him, pressed some money into his hand. He has not counted it; but when they have gone a few paces beyond the box for poor prisoners, he hastily returns and drops it in.

Mr. Garland has a coach waiting in a neighboring

street, and, taking Kit inside with him, bids the man drive home. At first, they can only travel at a foot pace, and then with torches going on before, because of the heavy fog. But, as they get farther from the river, and leave the closer portions of the town behind, they are able to dispense with this precaution and to proceed at a brisker rate. On the road, hard galloping would be too slow for Kit; but, when they are drawing near their journey's end, he begs they may go more slowly, and, when the house appears in sight, that they may stop — only for a minute or two, to give him time to breathe.

But there is no stopping then, for the old gentleman speaks stoutly to him, the horses mend their pace, and they are already at the garden-gate. Next minute, they are at the door. There is a noise of tongues, and tread of feet, inside. It opens. Kit rushes in, and finds his mother clinging round his neck.

And there, too, is the ever faithful Barbara's mother, still holding the baby as if she had never put it down since that sad day when they little hoped to have such joy as this — there she is, Heaven bless her, crying her eyes out, and sobbing as never woman sobbed before; and there is little Barbara — poor little Barbara, so much thinner and so much paler, and yet so very pretty — trembling like a leaf and supporting herself against the wall; and there is Mrs. Garland, neater and nicer than ever, fainting away stone dead with nobody to help her; and there is Mr. Abel, violently blowing his nose, and wanting to embrace everybody; and there is the single gentleman hovering round them all, and constant to nothing for an instant; and there is that good, dear, thoughtful little Jacob, sitting all alone by himself on the bottom stair, with his hands on

his knees like an old man, roaring fearfully without giving any trouble to anybody; and each and all of them are for the time clean out of their wits, and do jointly and severally commit all manner of follies.

And even when the rest have in some measure come to themselves again, and can find words and smiles, Barbara — that soft-hearted, gentle, foolish little Barbara — is suddenly missed, and found to be in a swoon by herself in the back parlor, from which swoon she falls into hysterics, and from which hysterics into a swoon again, and is, indeed, so bad, that despite a mortal quantity of vinegar and cold water she is hardly a bit better at last than she was at first. Then, Kit's mother comes in and says, will he come and speak to her; and Kit says "Yes," and goes; and he says in a kind voice "Barbara!" and Barbara's mother tells her that "it's only Kit;" and Barbara says (with her eyes closed all the time) "Oh! but is it him indeed?" and Barbara's mother says "To be sure it is, my dear; there's nothing the matter now." And in further assurance that he's safe and sound, Kit speaks to her again; and then Barbara goes off into another fit of laughter, and then into another fit of crying; and then Barbara's mother and Kit's mother nod to each other and pretend to scold her — but only to bring her to herself the faster, bless you! — and being experienced matrons, and acute at perceiving the first dawning symptoms of recovery, they comfort Kit with the assurance that "she'll do now," and so dismiss him to the place from whence he came.

Well! In that place (which is the next room) there are decanters of wine, and all that sort of thing, set out as grand as if Kit and his friends were first-rate company; and there is little Jacob, walking, as the popular

phrase is, into a home-made plum-cake, at a most surprising pace, and keeping his eye on the figs and oranges which are to follow, and making the best use of his time, you may believe. Kit no sooner comes in, than that single gentleman (never was such a busy gentleman) charges all the glasses — bumpers — and drinks his health, and tells him he shall never want a friend while *he* lives; and so does Mr. Garland, and so does Mrs. Garland, and so does Mr. Abel. But, even this honor and distinction is not all, for the single gentleman forthwith pulls out of his pocket, a massive silver watch — going hard, and right to half a second — and upon the back of this watch is engraved Kit's name, with flourishes all over; and in short it is Kit's watch, bought expressly for him, and presented to him on the spot. You may rest assured that Mr. and Mrs. Garland can't help hinting about their present in store, and that Mr. Abel tells outright that he has his; and that Kit is the happiest of the happy.

There is one friend he has not seen yet, and as he cannot be conveniently introduced into the family circle, by reason of his being an iron-shod quadruped, Kit takes the first opportunity of slipping away and hurrying to the stable. The moment he lays his hand upon the latch, the pony neighs the loudest pony's greeting; before he has crossed the threshold, the pony is capering about his loose box (for he brooks not the indignity of a halter), mad to give him welcome; and when Kit goes up to caress and pat him, the pony rubs his nose against his coat, and fondles him more lovingly than ever pony fondled man. It is the crowning circumstance of his earnest, heartfelt reception; and Kit fairly puts his arm round Whisker's neck and hugs him.

But how comes Barbara to trip in there? and how smart she is again! she has been at her glass since she recovered. How comes Barbara in the stable, of all places in the world? Why, since Kit has been away, the pony would take his food from nobody but her, and Barbara, you see, not dreaming Christopher was there, and just looking in, to see that everything was right, has come upon him unawares. Blushing little Barbara!

It may be that Kit has caressed the pony enough; it may be that there are even better things to caress than ponies. He leaves him for Barbara at any rate, and hopes she is better. Yes. Barbara is a great deal better. She is afraid — and here Barbara looks down and blushes more — that he must have thought her very foolish. "Not at all," says Kit. Barbara is glad of that, and coughs — Hem! — just the slightest cough possible — not more than that.

What a discreet pony, when he chooses! He is as quiet now, as if he were of marble. He has a very knowing look, but that he always has. "We have hardly had time to shake hands, Barbara," says Kit. Barbara gives him hers. Why, she is trembling now! Foolish, fluttering Barbara!

Arm's length? The length of an arm is not much. Barbara's was not a long arm, by any means, and besides, she didn't hold it out straight, but bent a little. Kit was so near her when they shook hands, that he could see a small tiny tear, yet trembling on an eyelash. It was natural that he should look at it, unknown to Barbara. It was natural that Barbara should raise her eyes unconsciously, and find him out. Was it natural that at that instant, without any previous impulse or

design, Kit should kiss Barbara? He did it, whether or no. Barbara said "for shame," but let him do it too — twice. He might have done it thrice, but the pony kicked up his heels and shook his head, as if he were suddenly taken with convulsions of delight, and Barbara being frightened, ran away — not straight to where her mother and Kit's mother were, though, lest they should see how red her cheeks were, and should ask her why. Sly little Barbara!

When the first transports of the whole party had subsided, and Kit and his mother, and Barbara and her mother, with little Jacob and the baby to boot, had had their suppers together — which there was no hurrying over, for they were going to stop there all night — Mr. Garland called Kit to him, and taking him into a room where they could be alone, told him that he had something yet to say, which would surprise him greatly. Kit looked so anxious and turned so pale on hearing this, that the old gentleman hastened to add, he would be agreeably surprised; and asked him if he would be ready next morning for a journey.

"For a journey, sir!" cried Kit.

"In company with me and my friend in the next room. Can you guess its purpose?"

Kit turned paler yet, and shook his head.

"Oh yes. I think you do already," said his master. "Try."

Kit murmured something rather rambling and unintelligible, but he plainly pronounced the words "Miss Nell," three or four times — shaking his head while he did so, as if he would add that there was no hope of that.

But Mr. Garland, instead of saying "Try again," as

Kit had made sure he would, told him, very seriously, that he had guessed right.

"The place of their retreat is indeed discovered," he said, "at last. And that is our journey's end."

Kit faltered out such questions as, where was it, and how had it been found, and how long since, and was she well, and happy?

"Happy she is, beyond all doubt," said Mr. Garland. "And well, I — I trust she will be soon. She has been weak and ailing, as I learn, but she was better when I heard this morning, and they were full of hope. Sit you down, and you shall hear the rest."

Scarcely venturing to draw his breath, Kit did as he was told. Mr. Garland then related to him, how he had a brother (of whom he would remember to have heard him speak, and whose picture, taken when he was a young man, hung in the best room), and how this brother lived a long way off, in a country-place, with an old clergyman who had been his early friend. How, although they loved each other as brothers should, they had not met for many years, but had communicated by letter from time to time, always looking forward to some period when they would take each other by the hand once more, and still letting the present time steal on, as it was the habit of men to do, and suffering the future to melt into the past. How this brother, whose temper was very mild and quiet and retiring — such as Mr. Abel's — was greatly beloved by the simple people among whom he dwelt, who quite revered the bachelor (for so they called him), and had every one experienced his charity and benevolence. How, even those slight circumstances had come to his knowledge, very slowly and in course of years, for the bachelor was one

of those whose goodness shuns the light, and who have more pleasure in discovering and extolling the good deeds of others, than in trumpeting their own, be they never so commendable. How, for that reason, he seldom told them of his village friends; but how, for all that, his mind had become so full of two among them — a child and an old man, to whom he had been very kind — that, in a letter received a few days before, he had dwelt upon them from first to last, and had told such a tale of their wandering, and mutual love, that few could read it without being moved to tears. How he, the recipient of that letter, was directly led to the belief that these must be the very wanderers for whom so much search had been made, and whom Heaven had directed to his brother's care. How he had written for such further information as would put the fact beyond all doubt; how it had that morning arrived; had confirmed his first impression into a certainty; and was the immediate cause of that journey being planned, which they were to take to-morrow.

"In the mean time," said the old gentleman rising, and laying his hand on Kit's shoulder, "you have great need of rest; for such a day as this, would wear out the strongest man. Good-night, and Heaven send our journey may have a prosperous ending!"

CHAPTER LXIX.

Kit was no sluggard next morning, but, springing from his bed some time before day, began to prepare for his welcome expedition. The hurry of spirits consequent upon the events of yesterday, and the unexpected intelligence he had heard at night, had troubled his sleep through the long dark hours, and summoned such uneasy dreams about his pillow that it was rest to rise.

But had it been the beginning of some great labor with the same end in view — had it been the commencement of a long journey, to be performed on foot in that inclement season of the year, to be pursued under every privation and difficulty, and to be achieved only with great distress, fatigue, and suffering — had it been the dawn of some painful enterprise, certain to task his utmost powers of resolution and endurance, and to need his utmost fortitude, but only likely to end, if happily achieved, in good fortune and delight to Nell — Kit's cheerful zeal would have been as highly roused: Kit's ardor and impatience would have been, at least, the same.

Nor was he alone excited and eager. Before he had been up a quarter of an hour the whole house were astir and busy. Everybody hurried to do something towards facilitating the preparations. The single gentleman, it is true, could do nothing himself, but he over-

looked everybody else and was more locomotive than anybody. The work of packing and making ready went briskly on, and by daybreak every preparation for the journey was completed. Then, Kit began to wish they had not been quite so nimble; for the travelling-carriage which had been hired for the occasion was not to arrive until nine o'clock, and there was nothing but breakfast to fill up the intervening blank of one hour and a half.

Yes there was, though. There was Barbara. Barbara was busy to be sure, but so much the better — Kit could help her, and that would pass away the time better than any means that could be devised. Barbara had no objection to this arrangement, and Kit, tracking out the idea which had come upon him so suddenly overnight, began to think that surely Barbara was fond of him, and surely he was fond of Barbara.

Now, Barbara, if the truth must be told — as it must and ought to be — Barbara seemed, of all the little household, to take least pleasure in the bustle of the occasion; and when Kit, in the openness of his heart, told her how glad and overjoyed it made him, Barbara became more downcast still, and seemed to have even less pleasure in it than before!

"You have not been home so long, Christopher," said Barbara — and it is impossible to tell how carelessly she said it — "You have not been home so long, that you need be glad to go away again, I should think."

"But for such a purpose," returned Kit. "To bring back Miss Nell! To see her again! Only think of that! I am so pleased too, to think that *you* will see her, Barbara, at last."

Barbara did not absolutely say that she felt no great

gratification on this point, but she expressed the sentiment so plainly by one little toss of her head, that Kit was quite disconcerted, and wondered, in his simplicity, why she was so cool about it.

"You'll say she has the sweetest and beautifullest face you ever saw, I know," said Kit, rubbing his hands. "I'm sure you'll say that!"

Barbara tossed her head again.

"What's the matter, Barbara?" said Kit.

"Nothing," cried Barbara. And Barbara pouted — not sulkily, or in an ugly manner, but just enough to make her look more cherry-lipped than ever.

There is no school in which a pupil gets on so fast, as that in which Kit became a scholar when he gave Barbara the kiss. He saw what Barbara meant now — he had his lesson by heart all at once — she was the book — there it was before him, as plain as print.

"Barbara," said Kit, "you're not cross with me?"

Oh dear no! Why should Barbara be cross? And what right had she to be cross? And what did it matter whether she was cross or no? Who minded *her!*

"Why, *I* do," said Kit. "Of course I do."

Barbara didn't see why it was of course, at all.

Kit was sure she must. Would she think again?

Certainly, Barbara would think again. No, she didn't see why it was of course. She didn't understand what Christopher meant. And besides she was sure they wanted her up-stairs by this time, and she must go, indeed ——

"No, but Barbara," said Kit, detaining her gently, "let us part friends. I was always thinking of you, in my troubles. I should have been a great deal more miserable than I was, if it hadn't been for you."

Goodness gracious, how pretty Barbara was when she colored — and when she trembled, like a little shrinking bird!

"I am telling you the truth, Barbara, upon my word, but not half so strong as I could wish," said Kit. "When I want you to be pleased to see Miss Nell, it's only because I should like you to be pleased, with what pleases me — that's all. As to her, Barbara, I think I could almost die to do her service, but you would think so too, if you knew her as I do. I am sure you would."

Barbara was touched, and sorry to have appeared indifferent.

"I have been used, you see," said Kit, "to talk and think of her, almost as if she was an angel. When I look forward to meeting her again, I think of her smiling as she used to do, and being glad to see me, and putting out her hand and saying, 'It's my own old Kit,' or some such words as those — like what she used to say. I think of seeing her happy, and with friends about her, and brought up as she deserves, and as she ought to be. When I think of myself, it's as her old servant, and one that loved her dearly, as his kind, good, gentle mistress; and who would have gone — yes, and still would go — through any harm to serve her. Once, I couldn't help being afraid that if she came back with friends about her she might forget, or be ashamed of having known, a humble lad like me, and so might speak coldly, which would have cut me, Barbara, deeper than I can tell. But when I came to think again, I felt sure that I was doing her wrong in this; and so I went on, as I did at first, hoping to see her once more, just as she used to be. Hoping this, and remembering what she was, has made me feel as if I would always try to please

her, and always be what I should like to seem to her if I was still her servant. If I'm the better for that — and I don't think I'm the worse — I am grateful to her for it, and love and honor her the more. That's the plain, honest truth, dear Barbara, upon my word it is!"

Little Barbara was not of a wayward or capricious nature, and, being full of remorse, melted into tears. To what more conversation this might have led, we need not stop to inquire; for the wheels of the carriage were heard at that moment, and, being followed by a smart ring at the garden gate, caused the bustle in the house, which had lain dormant for a short time, to burst again into tenfold life and vigor.

Simultaneously with the travelling equipage, arrived Mr. Chuckster in a hackney cab, with certain papers and supplies of money for the single gentleman, into whose hands he delivered them. This duty discharged, he subsided into the bosom of the family; and, entertaining himself with a strolling or peripatetic breakfast, watched with a genteel indifference, the process of loading the carriage.

"Snobby's in this I see, sir?" he said to Mr. Abel Garland. "I thought he wasn't in the last trip because it was expected that his presence wouldn't be acceptable to the ancient buffalo."

"To whom, sir," demanded Mr. Abel.

"To the old gentleman," returned Mr. Chuckster, slightly abashed.

"Our client prefers to take him now," said Mr. Abel, drily. "There is no longer any need for that precaution, as my father's relationship to a gentleman in whom the objects of his search have full confidence, will be

a sufficient guarantee for the friendly nature of their errand."

"Ah!" thought Mr. Chuckster, looking out of window, "anybody but me! Snobby before me, of course. He didn't happen to take that particular five-pound note, but I have not the smallest doubt that he's always up to something of that sort. I always said it, long before this came out. Devilish pretty girl that! 'Pon my soul, an amazing little creature!"

Barbara was the subject of Mr. Chuckster's commendations; and as she was lingering near the carriage (all being now ready for its departure), that gentleman was suddenly seized with a strong interest in the proceedings, which impelled him to swagger down the garden, and take up his position at a convenient ogling distance. Having had great experience of the sex, and being perfectly acquainted with all those little artifices which find the readiest road to their hearts, Mr. Chuckster, on taking his ground, planted one hand on his hip, and with the other adjusted his flowing hair. This is a favorite attitude in the polite circles, and, accompanied with a graceful whistling, has been known to do immense execution.

Such, however, is the difference between town and country, that nobody took the smallest notice of this insinuating figure; the wretches being wholly engaged in bidding the travellers farewell, in kissing hands to each other, waving handkerchiefs, and the like tame and vulgar practices. For, now, the single gentleman and Mr. Garland were in the carriage, and the post-boy was in the saddle, and Kit, well wrapped and muffled up, was in the rumble behind; and Mrs. Garland was there, and Mr. Abel was there, and Kit's mother was

there, and little Jacob was there, and Barbara's mother was visible in remote perspective, nursing the ever-wakeful baby; and all were nodding, beckoning, curtseying, or crying out "Good-by!" with all the energy they could express. In another minute, the carriage was out of sight; and Mr. Chuckster remained alone on the spot where it had lately been, with a vision of Kit standing up in the rumble waving his hand to Barbara, and of Barbara in the full light and lustre of his eyes — *his* eyes — Chuckster's — Chuckster the successful — on whom ladies of quality had looked with favor from phaetons in the parks on Sundays — waving hers to Kit!

How Mr. Chuckster, entranced by this monstrous fact, stood for some time rooted to the earth, protesting within himself that Kit was the Prince of felonious characters, and very Emperor or Great Mogul of Snobs, and how he clearly traced this revolting circumstance back to that old villany of the shilling, are matters foreign to our purpose; which is to track the rolling wheels, and bear the travellers company on their cold, bleak journey.

It was a bitter day. A keen wind was blowing, and rushed against them fiercely; bleaching the hard ground, shaking the white frost from the trees and hedges, and whirling it away like dust. But, little cared Kit for weather. There was a freedom and freshness in the wind, as it came howling by, which, let it cut never so sharp, was welcome. As it swept on with its cloud of frost, bearing down the dry twigs and boughs and withered leaves, and carrying them away pell-mell, it seemed as though some general sympathy had got abroad, and everything was in a hurry, like themselves. The harder

the gusts, the better progress they appeared to make. It was a good thing to go struggling and fighting forward, vanquishing them one by one; to watch them driving up, gathering strength and fury as they came along; to bend for a moment, as they whistled past; and then, to look back and see them speed away, their hoarse noise dying in the distance, and the stout trees cowering down before them.

All day long, it blew without cessation. The night was clear and starlight, but the wind had not fallen, and the cold was piercing. Sometimes — towards the end of a long stage — Kit could not help wishing it were a little warmer: but when they stopped to change horses, and he had had a good run, and what with that, and the bustle of paying the old postilion, and rousing the new one, and running to and fro again until the horses were put to, he was so warm that the blood tingled and smarted in his fingers' ends — then, he felt as if to have it one degree less cold would be to lose half the delight and glory of the journey; and up he jumped again, right cheerily, singing to the merry music of the wheels as they rolled away, and, leaving the towns-people in their warm beds, pursued their course along the lonely road.

Meantime the two gentlemen inside, who were little disposed to sleep, beguiled the time with conversation. As both were anxious and expectant, it naturally turned upon the subject of their expedition, on the manner in which it had been brought about, and on the hopes and fears they entertained respecting it. Of the former they had many, of the latter few — none perhaps beyond that indefinable uneasiness which is inseparable from suddenly awakened hope, and protracted expectation.

In one of the pauses of their discourse, and when half the night had worn away, the single gentleman, who had gradually become more and more silent and thoughtful, turned to his companion and said abruptly, —

"Are you a good listener?"

"Like most other men, I suppose," returned Mr. Garland, smiling. "I can be, if I am interested; and if not interested, I should still try to appear so. Why do you ask?"

"I have a short narrative on my lips," rejoined his friend, "and will try you with it. It is very brief."

Pausing for no reply, he laid his hand on the old gentleman's sleeve, and proceeded thus: —

"There were once two brothers, who loved each other dearly. There was a disparity in their ages — some twelve years. I am not sure but they may insensibly have loved each other the better for that reason. Wide as the interval between them was, however, they became rivals too soon. The deepest and strongest affection of both their hearts settled upon one object.

"The youngest — there were reasons for *his* being sensitive and watchful — was the first to find this out. I will not tell you what misery he underwent, what agony of soul he knew, how great his mental struggle was. He had been a sickly child. His brother, patient and considerate in the midst of his own high health and strength, had many and many a day denied himself the sports he loved, to sit beside his couch, telling him old stories till his pale face lighted up with an unwonted glow; to carry him in his arms to some green spot, where he could tend the poor pensive boy as he looked upon the bright summer day, and saw all nature healthy but himself; to be, in anyway, his fond and faithful nurse. I

may not dwell on all he did, to make the poor, weak creature love him, or my tale would have no end. But when the time of trial came, the younger brother's heart was full of those old days. Heaven strengthened it to repay the sacrifices of inconsiderate youth by one of thoughtful manhood. He left his brother to be happy. The truth never passed his lips, and he quitted the country, hoping to die abroad.

"The elder brother married her. She was in Heaven before long, and left him with an infant daughter.

"If you have seen the picture-gallery of any one old family, you will remember how the same face and figure — often the fairest and slightest of them all — come upon you in different generations; and how you trace the same sweet girl through a long line of portraits — never growing old or changing — the Good Angel of the race — abiding by them in all reverses — redeeming all their sins —

"In this daughter, the mother lived again. You may judge with what devotion he who lost that mother almost in the winning, clung to this girl, her breathing image. She grew to womanhood, and gave her heart to one who could not know its worth. Well! Her fond father could not see her pine and droop. He might be more deserving than he thought him. He surely might become so, with a wife like her. He joined their hands, and they were married.

"Through all the misery that followed this union; through all the cold neglect and undeserved reproach; through all the poverty he brought upon her; through all the struggles of their daily life, too mean and pitiful to tell, but dreadful to endure; she toiled on, in the deep devotion of her spirit, and in her better nature,

as only women can. Her means and substance wasted; her father nearly beggared by her husband's hand, and the hourly witness (for they lived now under one roof) of her ill-usage and unhappiness,— she never, but for him, bewailed her fate. Patient, and upheld by strong affection to the last, she died a widow of some three weeks' date, leaving to her father's care two orphans; one a son of ten or twelve years old; the other a girl — such another infant child — the same in helplessness, in age, in form, in feature — as she had been herself when her young mother died.

"The elder brother, grandfather to these two children, was now a broken man; crushed and borne down, less by the wait of years than by the heavy hand of sorrow. With the wreck of his possessions, he began to trade — in pictures first, and then in curious ancient things. He had entertained a fondness for such matters from a boy, and the tastes he had cultivated were now to yield him an anxious and precarious subsistence.

"The boy grew like his father in mind and person; the girl so like her mother, that when the old man had her on his knee, and looked into her mild blue eyes, he felt as if awakening from a wretched dream, and his daughter were a little child again. The wayward boy soon spurned the shelter of his roof, and sought associates more congenial to his taste. The old man and the child dwelt alone together.

"It was then, when the love of two dead people who had been nearest and dearest to his heart, was all transferred to this slight creature; when her face, constantly before him, reminded him, from hour to hour, of the too early change he had seen in such another — of all

the sufferings he had watched and known, and all his child had undergone; when the young man's profligate and hardened course drained him of money as his father's had, and even sometimes occasioned them temporary privation and distress; it was then that there began to beset him, and to be ever in his mind, a gloomy dread of poverty and want. He had no thought for himself in this. His fear was for the child. It was a spectre in his house, and haunted him night and day.

"The younger brother had been a traveller in many countries, and had made his pilgrimage through life alone. His voluntary banishment had been misconstrued, and he had borne (not without pain) reproach and slight, for doing that which had wrung his heart, and cast a mournful shadow on his path. Apart from this, communication between him and the elder was difficult, and uncertain, and often failed; still, it was not so wholly broken off but that he learnt — with long blanks and gaps between each interval of information — all that I have told you now.

"Then, dreams of their young, happy life — happy to him though laden with pain and early care — visited his pillow yet oftener than before; and every night, a boy again, he was at his brother's side. With the utmost speed he could exert, he settled his affairs; converted into money all the goods he had; and, with honorable wealth enough for both, with open heart and hand, with limbs that trembled as they bore him on, with emotion such as men can hardly bear and live, arrived one evening at his brother's door!"

The narrator, whose voice had faltered lately, stopped. "The rest," said Mr. Garland, pressing his hand after a pause, "I know."

"Yes," rejoined his friend, "we may spare ourselves the sequel. You know the poor result of all my search. Even when, by dint of such inquiries as the utmost vigilance and sagacity could set on foot, we found they had been seen with two poor travelling showmen — and in time discovered the men themselves — and in time, the actual place of their retreat; even then, we were too late. Pray God we are not too late again!"

"We cannot be," said Mr. Garland. "This time we must succeed."

"I have believed and hoped so," returned the other. "I try to believe and hope so still. But a heavy weight has fallen on my spirits, my good friend, and the sadness that gathers over me, will yield to neither hope nor reason."

"That does not surprise me," said Mr. Garland; "it is a natural consequence of the events you have recalled; of this dreary time and place; and above all, of this wild and dismal night. A dismal night, indeed! Hark! how the wind is howling!"

CHAPTER LXX.

Day broke, and found them still upon their way. Since leaving home, they had halted here and there for necessary refreshment, and had frequently been delayed, especially in the night time, by waiting for fresh horses. They had made no other stoppages, but the weather continued rough and the roads were often steep and heavy. It would be night again before they reached their place of destination.

Kit, all bluff and hardened with the cold, went on manfully; and, having enough to do to keep his blood circulating, to picture to himself the happy end of this adventurous journey, and to look about him and be amazed at everything, had little spare time for thinking of discomforts. Though his impatience, and that of his fellow-travellers, rapidly increased as the day waned, the hours did not stand still. The short daylight of winter soon faded away, and it was dark again when they had yet many miles to travel.

As it grew dusk; the wind fell; its distant moanings were more low and mournful; and, as it came creeping up the road, and rattling covertly among the dry brambles on either hand, it seemed like some great phantom for whom the way was narrow, whose garments rustled as it stalked along. By degrees it lulled and died away, and then it came on to snow.

The flakes fell fast and thick, soon covering the ground some inches deep, and spreading abroad a solemn stillness. The rolling wheels were noiseless, and the sharp ring and clatter of the horses' hoofs, became a dull, muffled tramp. The life of their progress seemed to be slowly hushed, and something death-like to usurp its place.

Shading his eyes from the falling snow, which froze upon their lashes, and obscured his sight, Kit often tried to catch the earliest glimpse of twinkling lights denoting their approach to some not distant town. He could descry objects enough at such times, but none correctly. Now, a tall church spire appeared in view, which presently became a tree, a barn, a shadow on the ground, thrown on it by their own bright lamps. Now, there were horsemen, foot-passengers, carriages going on before, or meeting them in narrow ways; which, when they were close upon them, turned to shadows too. A wall, a ruin, a sturdy gable end, would rise up in the road; and, when they were plunging headlong at it, would be the road itself. Strange turnings too, bridges, and sheets of water, appeared to start up here and there, making the way doubtful and uncertain; and yet they were on the same bare road, and these things, like the others, as they were passed, turned into dim illusions.

He descended slowly from his seat — for his limbs were numbed — when they arrived at a lone posting-house, and inquired how far they had to go to reach their journey's end. It was a late hour in such by-places, and the people were abed; but a voice answered from an upper window, Ten miles. The ten minutes that ensued appeared an hour; but at the end of that

time, a shivering figure led out the horses they required, and after another brief delay they were again in motion.

It was a cross-country road, full, after the first three or four miles, of holes and cart-ruts, which, being covered by the snow, were so many pitfalls to the trembling horses, and obliged them to keep a footpace. As it was next to impossible for men so much agitated as they were by this time, to sit still and move so slowly, all three got out and plodded on behind the carriage. The distance seemed interminable, and the walk was most laborious. As each was thinking within himself that the driver must have lost his way, a church bell, close at hand, struck the hour of midnight, and the carriage stopped. It had moved softly enough, but when it ceased to crunch the snow, the silence was as startling as if some great noise had been replaced by perfect stillness.

"This is the place, gentlemen," said the driver, dismounting from his horse, and knocking at the door of a little inn. "Halloa! Past twelve o'clock is the dead of night here."

The knocking was loud and long, but it failed to rouse the drowsy inmates. All continued dark and silent as before. They fell back a little, and looked up at the windows, which were mere black patches in the whitened house front. No light appeared. The house might have been deserted, or the sleepers dead, for any air of light it had about it.

They spoke together with a strange inconsistency, in whispers; unwilling to disturb again, the dreary echoes they had just now raised.

"Let us go on," said the younger brother, "and leave this good fellow to wake them, if he can. I cannot rest

until I know that we are not too late. Let us go on, in the name of Heaven!"

They did so, leaving the postilion to order such accommodation as the house afforded, and to renew his knocking. Kit accompanied them with a little bundle, which he had hung in the carriage when they left home, and had not forgotten since — the bird in his old cage — just as she had left him. She would be glad to see her bird, he knew.

The road wound gently downward. As they proceeded, they lost sight of the church whose clock they had heard, and of the small village clustering round it. The knocking, which was now renewed, and which in that stillness they could plainly hear, troubled them. They wished the man would forbear, or that they had told him not to break the silence until they returned.

The old church tower, clad in the ghostly garb of pure cold white again rose up before them, and a few moments brought them close beside it. A venerable building — gray, even in the midst of the hoary landscape. An ancient sun-dial on the belfry wall was nearly hidden by the snow-drift, and scarcely to be known for what it was. Time itself seemed to have grown dull and old, as if no day were ever to displace the melancholy night.

A wicket gate was close at hand, but there was more than one path across the church-yard to which it led, and, uncertain which to take, they came to a stand again.

The village street — if street that could be called which was an irregular cluster of poor cottages of many heights and ages, some with their fronts, some with their backs, and some with their gable ends towards the road,

with here and there a sign-post, or a shed encroaching on the path — was close at hand. There was a faint light in a chamber window not far off, and Kit ran towards that house to ask their way.

His first shout was answered by an old man within, who presently appeared at the casement, wrapping some garment round his throat as a protection from the cold, and demanded who was abroad at that unseasonable hour wanting him.

"'Tis hard weather this," he grumbled, "and not a night to call me up in. My trade is not of that kind that I need be roused from bed. The business on which folks want me, will keep cold, especially at this season. What do you want?"

"I would not have roused you, if I had known you were old and ill," said Kit.

"Old!" repeated the other peevishly. "How do you know I am old? Not so old as you think, friend, perhaps. As to being ill, you will find many young people in worse case than I am. More's the pity that it should be so — not that I should be strong and hearty for my years, I mean, but that they should be weak and tender. I ask your pardon though," said the old man, "if I spoke rather rough at first. My eyes are not good at night — that's neither age nor illness; they never were — and I didn't see you were a stranger."

"I am sorry to call you from your bed," said Kit, "but those gentlemen you may see by the church-yard gate, are strangers too, who have just arrived from a long journey, and seek the parsonage-house. You can direct us?"

"I should be able to," answered the old man, in a trembling voice, "for, come next summer, I have been

sexton here, good fifty years. The right-hand path, friend, is the road. — There is no ill news for our good gentleman, I hope?"

Kit thanked him, and made him a hasty answer in the negative; he was turning back, when his attention was caught by the voice of a child. Looking up he saw a very little creature at a neighboring window.

"What is that?" cried the child, earnestly. "Has my dream come true? Pray speak to me, whoever that is, awake and up."

"Poor boy!" said the sexton, before Kit could answer, "how goes it, darling?"

"Has my dream come true?" exclaimed the child again, in a voice so fervent that it might have thrilled to the heart of any listener. "But no, that can never be! How could it be — Oh! how could it!"

"I guess his meaning," said the sexton. "To bed again, poor boy!"

"Ay!" cried the child, in a burst of despair. "I knew it could never be, I felt too sure of that, before I asked! But, all to-night, and last night, too, it was the same. I never fall asleep but that cruel dream comes back."

"Try to sleep again," said the old man, soothingly. "It will go, in time."

"No, no, I would rather that it staid — cruel as it is, I would rather that it staid," rejoined the child. "I am not afraid to have it in my sleep, but I am so sad — so very, very sad."

The old man blessed him, the child in tears replied Good-night, and Kit was again alone.

He hurried back, moved by what he had heard, though more by the child's manner than by anything he

had said, as his meaning was hidden from him. They took the path indicated by the sexton, and soon arrived before the parsonage wall. Turning round to look about them when they had got thus far, they saw, among some ruined buildings at a distance, one single solitary light.

It shone from what appeared to be an old oriel window, and being surrounded by the deep shadows of overhanging walls, sparkled like a star. Bright and glimmering as the stars above their heads, lonely and motionless as they, it seemed to claim some kindred with the eternal lamps of Heaven, and to burn in fellowship with them.

"What light is that!" said the younger brother.

"It is surely," said Mr. Garland, "in the ruin where they live. I see no other ruin hereabouts."

"They cannot," returned the brother hastily, "be waking at this late hour"—

Kit interposed directly, and begged that, while they rang and waited at the gate, they would let him make his way to where this light was shining, and try to ascertain if any people were about. Obtaining the permission he desired, he darted off with breathless eagerness, and, still carrying the bird-cage in his hand, made straight towards the spot.

It was not easy to hold that pace among the graves, and at another time he might have gone more slowly, or round by the path. Unmindful of all obstacles, however, he pressed forward without slackening his speed, and soon arrived within a few yards of the window.

He approached as softly as he could, and advancing so near the wall as to brush the whitened ivy with his dress, listened. There was no sound inside. The church itself was not more quiet. Touching the glass

with his cheek, he listened again. No. And yet there was such a silence all around that he felt sure he could have heard even the breathing of a sleeper, if there had been one there.

A strange circumstance, a light in such a place at that time of night, with no one near it.

A curtain was drawn across the lower portion of the window, and he could not see into the room. But there was no shadow thrown upon it from within. To have gained a footing on the wall and tried to look in from above, would have been attended with some danger — certainly with some noise, and the chance of terrifying the child, if that really were her habitation. Again and again he listened; again and again the same wearisome blank.

Leaving the spot with slow and cautious steps, and skirting the ruin for a few paces, he came at length to a door. He knocked. No answer. But there was a curious noise inside. It was difficult to determine what it was. It bore a resemblance to the low moaning of one in pain, but it was not that, being far too regular and constant. Now it seemed a kind of song, now a wail — seemed, that is, to his changing fancy, for the sound itself was never changed or checked. It was unlike anything he had ever heard; and in its tone there was something fearful, chilling, and unearthly.

The listener's blood ran colder now, than ever it had done in frost and snow, but he knocked again. There was no answer, and the sound went on without any interruption. He laid his hand softly upon the latch, and put his knee against the door. It was secured on the inside, but yielded to the pressure, and turned upon its hinges. He saw the glimmering of a fire upon the old walls, and entered.

CHAPTER LXXI.

THE dull, red glow of a wood fire — for no lamp or candle burnt within the room — showed him a figure, seated on the hearth with its back towards him, bending over the fitful light. The attitude was that of one who sought the heat. It was, and yet was not. The stooping posture and the cowering form were there, but no hands were stretched out to meet the grateful warmth, no shrug or shiver compared its luxury with the piercing cold outside. With limbs huddled together, head bowed down, arms crossed upon the breast, and fingers tightly clenched, it rocked to and fro upon its seat without a moment's pause, accompanying the action with the mournful sound he had heard.

The heavy door had closed behind him on his entrance, with a crash that made him start. The figure neither spoke, nor turned to look, nor gave in any other way the faintest sign of having heard the noise. The form was that of an old man, his white head akin in color to the mouldering embers upon which he gazed. He, and the failing light and dying fire, the time-worn room, the solitude, the wasted life, and gloom, were all in fellowship. Ashes, and dust, and ruin!

Kit tried to speak, and did pronounce some words, though what they were he scarcely knew. Still the same terrible low cry went on — still the same rocking

in the chair — the same stricken figure was there, unchanged and heedless of his presence.

He had his hand upon the latch, when something in the form; distinctly seen as one log broke and fell, and, as it fell, blazed up — arrested it. He returned to where he had stood before — advanced a pace — another — another still. Another, and he saw the face. Yes! Changed as it was, he knew it well.

"Master!" he cried, stooping on one knee and catching at his hand. "Dear master. Speak to me!"

The old man turned slowly towards him; and muttered in a hollow voice, —

"This is another! — How many of these spirits there have been to-night!"

"No spirit, master. No one but your old servant. You know me now, I am sure? Miss Nell — where is she — where is she!"

"They all say that!" cried the old man. "They all ask the same question. A spirit!"

"Where is she?" demanded Kit. "Oh tell me but that — but that, dear master!"

"She is asleep — yonder — in there."

"Thank God!"

"Ay! Thank God!" returned the old man. "I have prayed to Him, many, and many, and many a live-long night, when she has been asleep, He knows. Hark! Did she call?"

"I heard no voice."

"You did. You hear her now. Do you tell me that you don't hear *that?*"

He started up, and listened again.

"Nor that?" he cried, with a triumphant smile. "Can anybody know that voice so well as I! Hush! hush!"

Motioning to him to be silent, he stole away into another chamber. After a short absence (during which he could be heard to speak in a softened soothing tone) he returned, bearing in his hand a lamp.

"She is still asleep," he whispered. "You were right. She did not call — unless she did so in her slumber. She has called to me in her sleep before now, sir; as I have sat by, watching, I have seen her lips move, and have known, though no sound came from them, that she spoke of me. I feared the light might dazzle her eyes and wake her, so I brought it here."

He spoke rather to himself than to the visitor, but when he had put the lamp upon the table, he took it up, as if impelled by some momentary recollection or curiosity, and held it near his face. Then, as if forgetting his motive in the very action, he turned away and put it down again.

"She is sleeping soundly," he said; "but no wonder. Angel hands have strewn the ground deep with snow, that the lightest footstep may be lighter yet; and the very birds are dead, that they may not wake her. She used to feed them, sir. Though never so cold and hungry, the timid things would fly from us. They never flew from her!"

Again he stopped to listen, and scarcely drawing breath, listened for a long, long time. That fancy past, he opened an old chest, took out some clothes as fondly as if they had been living things, and began to smooth and brush them with his hand.

"Why dost thou lie so idle there, dear Nell," he murmured, "when there are bright red berries out of doors waiting for thee to pluck them! Why dost thou lie so idle there, when thy little friends come creeping to the

door, crying 'where is Nell — sweet Nell?' — and sob, and weep, because they do not see thee. She was always gentle with children. The wildest would do her bidding — she had a tender way with them, indeed she had!"

Kit had no power to speak. His eyes were filled with tears.

"Her little homely dress, — her favorite!" cried the old man, pressing it to his breast, and patting it with his shrivelled hand. "She will miss it when she wakes. They have hid it here in sport, but she shall have it — she shall have it. I would not vex my darling, for the wide world's riches. See here — these shoes — how worn they are — she kept them to remind her of our last long journey. You see where the little feet went bare upon the ground. They told me, afterwards, that the stones had cut and bruised them. *She* never told me that. No, no, God bless her! and, I have remembered since, she walked behind me, sir, that I might not see how lame she was — but yet she had my hand in hers, and seemed to lead me still."

He pressed them to his lips, and having carefully put them back again, went on communing with himself — looking wistfully from time to time towards the chamber he had lately visited.

"She was not wont to be a lie-abed; but she was well then. We must have patience. When she is well again, she will rise early, as she used to do, and ramble abroad in the healthy morning time. I often tried to track the way she had gone, but her small footstep left no print upon the dewy ground, to guide me. Who is that? Shut the door. Quick! — Have we not enough to do to drive away that marble cold, and keep her warm!"

The door was indeed opened, for the entrance of Mr. Garland and his friend, accompanied by two other persons. These were the school-master, and the bachelor. The former held a light in his hand. He had, it seemed, but gone to his own cottage to replenish the exhausted lamp, at the moment when Kit came up and found the old man alone.

He softened again at sight of these two friends, and, laying aside the angry manner — if to anything so feeble and so sad the term can be applied — in which he had spoken when the door opened, resumed his former seat, and subsided, by little and little, into the old action, and the old, dull, wandering sound.

Of the strangers, he took no heed whatever. He had seen them, but appeared quite incapable of interest or curiosity. The younger brother stood apart. The bachelor drew a chair towards the old man, and sat down close beside him. After a long silence, he ventured to speak.

"Another night, and not in bed!" he said softly; "I hoped you would be more mindful of your promise to me. Why do you not take some rest?"

"Sleep has left me," returned the old man. "It is all with her!"

"It would pain her very much to know that you were watching thus," said the bachelor. "You would not give her pain?"

"I am not so sure of that, if it would only rouse her. She has slept so very long. And yet I am rash to say so. It is a good and happy sleep — eh?"

"Indeed it is," returned the bachelor. "Indeed, indeed, it is!"

"That's well! — and the waking" — faltered the old man.

"Happy too. Happier than tongue can tell, or heart of man conceive."

They watched him as he rose and stole on tiptoe to the other chamber where the lamp had been replaced. They listened as he spoke again within its silent walls. They looked into the faces of each other, and no man's cheek was free from tears. He came back, whispering that she was still asleep, but that he thought she had moved. It was her hand, he said — a little — a very, very little — but he was pretty sure she had moved it — perhaps in seeking his. He had known her do that, before now, though in the deepest sleep the while. And when he had said this, he dropped into his chair again, and clasping his hands above his head, uttered a cry never to be forgotten.

The poor school-master motioned to the bachelor that he would come on the other side, and speak to him. They gently unlocked his fingers, which he had twisted in his gray hair, and pressed them in their own.

"He will hear me," said the school-master, "I am sure. He will hear either me or you if we beseech him. She would, at all times."

"I will hear any voice she liked to hear," cried the old man. "I love all she loved!"

"I know you do," returned the school-master. "I am certain of it. Think of her; think of all the sorrows and afflictions you have shared together; of all the trials, and all the peaceful pleasures, you have jointly known."

"I do. I do. I think of nothing else."

"I would have you think of nothing else to-night — of nothing but those things which will soften your heart, dear friend, and open it to old affections and old times.

It is so that she would speak to you herself, and in her name it is that I speak now."

"You do well to speak softly," said the old man. "We will not wake her. I should be glad to see her eyes again, and to see her smile. There is a smile upon her young face now, but it is fixed and changeless. I would have it come and go. That shall be in Heaven's good time. We will not wake her."

"Let us not talk of her in her sleep, but as she used to be when you were journeying together, far away — as she was at home, in the old house from which you fled together — as she was, in the old cheerful time," said the school-master.

"She was always cheerful — very cheerful," cried the old man, looking steadfastly at him. "There was ever something mild and quiet about her, I remember, from the first; but she was of a happy nature."

"We have heard you say," pursued the school-master, "that in this, and in all goodness, she was like her mother. You can think of, and remember her?"

He maintained his steadfast look, but gave no answer.

"Or even one before her," said the bachelor. "It is many years ago, and affliction makes the time longer, but you have not forgotten her whose death contributed to make this child so dear to you, even before you knew her worth or could read her heart? Say, that you could carry back your thoughts to very distant days — to the time of your early life — when, unlike this fair flower, you did not pass your youth alone. Say, that you could remember, long ago, another child who loved you dearly, you being but a child yourself. Say, that you had a brother, long forgotten, long unseen, long separated from

you, who now, at last, in your utmost need came back to comfort and console you" —

"To be to you what you were once to him," cried the younger, falling on his knee before him; "to repay your old affection, brother dear, by constant care, solicitude, and love; to be, at your right hand, what he has never ceased to be when oceans rolled between us; to call to witness his unchanging truth and mindfulness of by-gone days, whole years of desolation. Give me but one word of recognition, brother — and never — no never, in the brightest moment of our youngest days, when, poor silly boys, we thought to pass our lives together — have we been half as dear and precious to each other as we shall be from this time hence!"

The old man looked from face to face, and his lips moved; but no sound came from them in reply.

"If we were knit together then," pursued the younger brother, "what will be the bond between us now! Our love and fellowship began in childhood, when life was all before us, and will be resumed when we have proved it, and are but children at the last. As many restless spirits, who have hunted fortune, fame, or pleasure through the world, retire in their decline to where they first drew breath, vainly seeking to be children once again before they die, so we, less fortunate than they in early life, but happier in its closing scenes, will set up our rest again among our boyish haunts, and going home with no hope realized, that had its growth in manhood — carrying back nothing that we brought away, but our old yearnings to each other — saving no fragment from the wreck of life, but that which first endeared it — may be, indeed, but children as at first. And even," he added in an altered voice, "even if what I dread to name has come to pass

— even if that be so, or is to be (which Heaven forbid and spare us!) — still, dear brother, we are not apart, and have that comfort in our great affliction."

By little and little, the old man had drawn back towards the inner chamber, while these words were spoken. He pointed there, as he replied, with trembling lips.

"You plot among you to wean my heart from her. You never will do that — never while I have life. I have no relative or friend but her — I never had — I never will have. She is all in all to me. It is too late to part us now."

Waving them off with his hand, and calling softly to her as he went, he stole into the room. They who were left behind, drew close together, and after a few whispered words — not unbroken by emotion, or easily uttered — followed him. They moved so gently, that their footsteps made no noise; but there were sobs from among the group, and sounds of grief and mourning.

For she was dead. There, upon her little bed, she lay at rest. The solemn stillness was no marvel now.

She was dead. No sleep so beautiful and calm, so free from trace of pain, so fair to look upon. She seemed a creature fresh from the hand of God, and waiting for the breath of life; not one who had lived and suffered death.

Her couch was dressed with here and there some winter berries and green leaves, gathered in a spot she had been used to favor. "When I die, put near me something that has loved the light, and had the sky above it always." Those were her words.

She was dead. Dear, gentle, patient, noble Nell, was dead. Her little bird — a poor slight thing the pressure of a finger would have crushed — was stirring nimbly in

its cage; and the strong heart of its child-mistress was mute and motionless forever.

Where were the traces of her early cares, her sufferings, and fatigues? All gone. Sorrow was dead indeed in her, but peace and perfect happiness were born; imaged in her tranquil beauty and profound repose.

And still her former self lay there, unaltered in this change. Yes. The old fireside had smiled upon that same sweet face; it had passed, like a dream, through haunts of misery and care; at the door of the poor school-master on the summer evening, before the furnace fire upon the cold wet night, at the still bedside of the dying boy, there had been the same mild lovely look. So shall we know the angels in their majesty, after death.

The old man held one languid arm in his, and had the small hand tight folded to his breast, for warmth. It was the hand she had stretched out to him with her last smile — the hand that had led him on, through all their wanderings. Ever and anon he pressed it to his lips; then hugged it to his breast again, murmuring that it was warmer now; and, as he said it, he looked, in agony, to those who stood around, as if imploring them to help her.

She was dead, and past all help, or need of it. The ancient rooms she had seemed to fill with life, even while her own was waning fast — the garden she had tended — the eyes she had gladdened — the noiseless haunts of many a thoughtful hour — the paths she had trodden as it were but yesterday — could know her never more.

"It is not," said the school-master, as he bent down to kiss her on the cheek, and gave his tears free vent,

"it is not on earth that Heaven's justice ends. Think what earth is, compared with the world to which her young spirit has winged its early flight; and say, if one deliberate wish expressed in solemn terms above this bed could call her back to life, which of us would utter it!"

CHAPTER LXXII.

When morning came, and they could speak more calmly on the subject of their grief, they heard how her life had closed.

She had been dead two days. They were all about her at the time, knowing that the end was drawing on. She died soon after daybreak. They had read and talked to her in the earlier portion of the night, but as the hours crept on, she sunk to sleep. They could tell by what she faintly uttered in her dreams, that they were of her journeyings with the old man; they were of no painful scenes, but of people who had helped and used them kindly, for she often said "God bless you!" with great fervor. Waking, she never wandered in her mind but once, and that was of beautiful music which she said was in the air. God knows. It may have been.

Opening her eyes at last, from a very quiet sleep, she begged that they would kiss her once again. That done, she turned to the old man with a lovely smile upon her face — such, they said, as they had never seen, and never could forget — and clung with both her arms about his neck. They did not know that she was dead, at first.

She had spoken very often of the two sisters, who,

she said, were like dear friends to her. She wished they could be told how much she thought about them, and how she had watched them as they walked together, by the river side at night. She would like to see poor Kit, she had often said of late. She wished there was somebody to take her love to Kit. And, even then, she never thought or spoke about him, but with something of her old, clear, merry laugh.

For the rest, she had never murmured or complained; but, with a quiet mind, and manner quite unaltered — save that she every day became more earnest and more grateful to them — faded like the light upon a summer's evening.

The child who had been her little friend came there, almost as soon as it was day, with an offering of dried flowers which he begged them to lay upon her breast. It was he who had come to the window overnight and spoken to the sexton, and they saw in the snow traces of small feet, where he had been lingering near the room in which she lay, before he went to bed. He had a fancy, it seemed, that they had left her there alone; and could not bear the thought.

He told them of his dream again, and that it was of her being restored to them, just as she used to be. He begged hard to see her, saying that he would be very quiet, and that they need not fear his being alarmed, for he had sat alone by his young brother all day long, when *he* was dead, and had felt glad to be so near him. They let him have his wish; and indeed he kept his word, and was, in his childish way, a lesson to them all.

Up to that time, the old man had not spoken once — except to her — or stirred from the bedside. But

when he saw her little favorite, he was moved as they had not seen him yet, and made as though he would have him come nearer. Then, pointing to the bed, he burst into tears for the first time, and they who stood by, knowing that the sight of this child had done him good, left them alone together.

Soothing him with his artless talk of her, the child persuaded him to take some rest, to walk abroad, to do almost as he desired him. And when the day came on, which must remove her in her earthly shape from earthly eyes forever, he led him away, that he might not know when she was taken from him.

They were to gather fresh leaves and berries for her bed. It was Sunday — a bright, clear, wintry afternoon — and as they traversed the village street, those who were walking in their path drew back to make way for them, and gave them a softened greeting. Some shook the old man kindly by the hand, some stood uncovered while he tottered by, and many cried "God help him!" as he passed along.

"Neighbor!" said the old man, stopping at the cottage where his young guide's mother dwelt, "how is it that the folks are nearly all in black to-day? I have seen a mourning ribbon or a piece of crape on almost every one."

She could not tell, the woman said.

"Why, you yourself — you wear the color too!" he said. "Windows are closed that never used to be by day. What does this mean?"

Again the woman said she could not tell.

"We must go back," said the old man, hurriedly. "We must see what this is."

"No, no," cried the child, detaining him. "Remem-

ber what you promised. Our way is to the old green lane, where she and I so often were, and where you found us, more than once, making those garlands for her garden. Do not turn back!"

"Where is she now?" said the old man. "Tell me that."

"Do you not know?" returned the child. "Did we not leave her, but just now?"

"True. True. It *was* her we left — was it!"

He pressed his hand upon his brow, looked vacantly round, and as if impelled by a sudden thought, crossed the road, and entered the sexton's house. He and his deaf assistant were sitting before the fire. Both rose up, on seeing who it was.

The child made a hasty sign to them with his hand. It was the action of an instant, but that, and the old man's look, were quite enough.

"Do you — do you bury any one to-day?" he said, eagerly.

"No, no! Who should we bury, sir?" returned the sexton.

"Ay, who indeed! I say with you, who indeed?"

"It is a holiday with us, good sir?" returned the sexton mildly. "We have no work to do to-day."

"Why then, I'll go where you will," said the old man, turning to the child. "You're sure of what you tell me? You would not deceive me? I am changed, even in the little time since you last saw me."

"Go thy ways with him, sir," cried the sexton, "and Heaven be with ye both!"

"I am quite ready," said the old man, meekly. "Come, boy, come" — and so submitted to be led away.

And now the bell — the bell she had so often heard, by night and day, and listened to with solemn pleasure almost as a living voice — rung its remorseless toll, for her, so young, so beautiful, so good. Decrepit age, and vigorous life, and blooming youth, and helpless infancy, poured forth — on crutches, in the pride of strength and health, in the full blush of promise, in the mere dawn of life — to gather round her tomb. Old men were there, whose eyes were dim and senses failing — grandmothers, who might have died ten years ago, and still been old — the deaf, the blind, the lame, the palsied, the living dead in many shapes and forms, to see the closing of that early grave. What was the death it would shut in, to that which still could crawl and creep above it!

Along the crowded path they bore her now; pure as the newly fallen snow that covered it; whose day on earth had been as fleeting. Under the porch, where she had sat when Heaven in its mercy brought her to that peaceful spot, she passed again; and the old church received her in its quiet shade.

They carried her to one old nook, where she had many and many a time sat musing, and laid their burden softly on the pavement. The light streamed on it through the colored window — a window, where the boughs of trees were ever rustling in the summer, and where the birds sang sweetly all day long. With every breath of air that stirred among those branches in the sunshine, some trembling, changing light, would fall upon her grave.

Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust! Many a young hand dropped in its little wreath, many a stifled sob was heard. Some — and they were not a few —

knelt down. All were sincere and truthful in their sorrow.

The service done, the mourners stood apart, and the villagers closed round to look into the grave before the pavement-stone should be replaced. One, called to mind how he had seen her sitting on that very spot, and how her book had fallen on her lap, and she was gazing with a pensive face upon the sky. Another, told how he had wondered much that one so delicate as she, should be so bold; how she had never feared to enter the church alone at night, but had loved to linger there when all was quiet, and even to climb the tower stair, with no more light than that of the moon rays stealing through the loopholes in the thick old wall. A whisper went about among the oldest, that she had seen and talked with angels; and when they called to mind how she had looked, and spoken, and her early death, some thought it might be so, indeed. Thus, coming to the grave in little knots, and glancing down, and giving place to others, and falling off in whispering groups of three or four, the church was cleared in time, of all but the sexton and the mourning friends.

They saw the vault covered, and the stone fixed down. Then, when the dusk of evening had come on, and not a sound disturbed the sacred stillness of the place — when the bright moon poured in her light on tomb and monument, on pillar, wall, and arch, and most of all (it seemed to them) upon her quiet grave — in that calm time, when outward things and inward thoughts teem with assurances of immortality, and worldly hopes and fears are humbled in the dust before them — then, with tranquil and submissive hearts they turned away, and left the child with God.

Oh! it is hard to take to heart the lesson that such deaths will teach, but let no man reject it, for it is one that all must learn, and is a mighty, universal Truth. When Death strikes down the innocent and young, for every fragile form from which he lets the panting spirit free, a hundred virtues rise, in shapes of mercy, charity, and love, to walk the world, and bless it. Of every tear that sorrowing mortals shed on such green graves, some good is born, some gentler nature comes. In the destroyer's steps there spring up bright creations that defy his power, and his dark path becomes a way of light to Heaven.

It was late when the old man came home. The boy had led him to his own dwelling, under some pretence, on their way back; and, rendered drowsy by his long ramble and late want of rest, he had sunk into a deep sleep by the fireside. He was perfectly exhausted, and they were careful not to rouse him. The slumber held him a long time, and when he at length awoke the moon was shining.

The younger brother, uneasy at his protracted absence, was watching at the door for his coming, when he appeared in the pathway with his little guide. He advanced to meet them, and tenderly obliging the old man to lean upon his arm, conducted him with slow and trembling steps towards the house.

He repaired to her chamber, straight. Not finding what he had left there, he returned with distracted looks to the room in which they were assembled. From that, he rushed into the school-master's cottage, calling her name. They followed close upon him, and when he had vainly searched it, brought him home.

With such persuasive words as pity and affection could suggest, they prevailed upon him to sit among them and hear what they should tell him. Then, endeavoring by every little artifice to prepare his mind for what must come, and dwelling with many fervent words upon the happy lot to which she had been removed, they told him, at last, the truth. The moment it had passed their lips, he fell down among them like a murdered man.

For many hours, they had little hope of his surviving; but grief is strong, and he recovered.

If there be any who have never known the blank that follows death — the weary void — the sense of desolation that will come upon the strongest minds, when something familiar and beloved is missed at every turn — the connection between inanimate and senseless things, and the object of recollection, when every household god becomes a monument and every room a grave — if there be any who have not known this, and proved it by their own experience, they can never faintly guess, how, for many days, the old man pined and moped away the time, and wandered here and there as seeking something, and had no comfort.

Whatever power of thought or memory he retained, was all bound up in her. He never understood, or seemed to care to understand, about his brother. To every endearment and attention he continued listless. If they spoke to him on this, or any other theme — save one — he would hear them patiently for a while, then turn away, and go on seeking as before.

On that one theme, which was in his and all their minds, it was impossible to touch. Dead! He could not hear or bear the word. The slightest hint of it

would throw him into a paroxysm, like that he had had when it was first spoken. In what hope he lived, no man could tell; but, that he had some hope of finding her again — some faint and shadowy hope, deferred from day to day, and making him from day to day more sick and sore at heart — was plain to all.

They bethought them of a removal from the scene of this last sorrow; of trying whether change of place would rouse or cheer him. His brother sought the advice of those who were accounted skilful in such matters, and they came and saw him. Some of the number stayed upon the spot, conversed with him when he would converse, and watched him as he wandered up and down, alone and silent. Move him where they might, they said, he would ever seek to get back there. His mind would run upon that spot. If they confined him closely, and kept a strict guard upon him, they might hold him prisoner, but if he could by any means escape, he would surely wander back to that place, or die upon the road.

The boy to whom he had submitted at first, had no longer any influence with him. At times he would suffer the child to walk by his side, or would even take such notice of his presence as giving him his hand, or would stop to kiss his cheek, or pat him on the head. At other times, he would entreat him — not unkindly — to be gone, and would not brook him near. But, whether alone, or with this pliant friend, or with those who would have given him, at any cost or sacrifice, some consolation or some peace of mind, if happily the means could have been devised; he was at all times the same — with no love or care for anything in life — a broken-hearted man.

At length, they found, one day, that he had risen

early, and, with his knapsack on his back, his staff in hand, her own straw hat, and little basket full of such things as she had been used to carry, was gone. As they were making ready to pursue him far and wide, a frightened school-boy came who had seen him, but a moment before, sitting in the church — upon her grave, he said.

They hastened there, and going softly to the door, espied him in the attitude of one who waited patiently. They did not disturb him then, but kept a watch upon him all that day. When it grew quite dark, he rose and returned home, and went to bed, murmuring to himself, "She will come to-morrow!"

Upon the morrow he was there again from sunrise until night; and still at night he laid him down to rest, and murmured, "She will come to-morrow!"

And thenceforth, every day, and all day long, he waited at her grave, for her. How many pictures of new journeys over pleasant country, of resting-places under the free broad sky, of rambles in the fields and woods, and paths not often trodden — how many tones of that one well-remembered voice — how many glimpses of the form, the fluttering dress, the hair that waved so gayly in the wind — how many visions of what had been, and what he hoped was yet to be — rose up before him, in the old, dull, silent church! He never told them what he thought, or where he went. He would sit with them at night, pondering with a secret satisfaction, they could see, upon the flight that he and she would take before night came again; and still they would hear him whisper in his prayers, "Lord! Let her come to-morrow!"

The last time was on a genial day in spring. He did

not return at the usual hour, and they went to seek him. He was lying dead upon the stone.

They laid him by the side of her whom he had loved so well; and, in the church where they had often prayed, and mused, and lingered hand in hand, the child and the old man slept together.

CHAPTER THE LAST.

THE magic reel, which, rolling on before, has led the chronicler thus far, now slackens in its pace, and stops. It lies before the goal; the pursuit is at an end.

It remains but to dismiss the leaders of the little crowd who have borne us company upon the road, and so to close the journey.

Foremost among them, smooth Sampson Brass and Sally, arm in arm, claim our polite attention.

Mr. Sampson, then, being detained, as already has been shown, by the justice upon whom he called, and being so strongly pressed to protract his stay that he could by no means refuse, remained under his protection for a considerable time, during which the great attention of his entertainer kept him so extremely close, that he was quite lost to society, and never even went abroad for exercise saving into a small paved yard. So well, indeed, was his modest and retiring temper understood by those with whom he had to deal, and so jealous were they of his absence, that they required a kind of friendly bond to be entered into by two substantial housekeepers, in the sum of fifteen hundred pounds apiece, before they would suffer him to quit their hospitable roof — doubting it appeared, that he would return, if once let loose, on any other terms. Mr. Brass, struck with the humor of this jest, and carrying out its spirit to the ut-

most, sought from his wide connection a pair of friends whose joint possessions fell some halfpence short of fifteen pence, and proffered them as bail — for that was the merry word agreed upon on both sides. These gentlemen being rejected after twenty-four hours' pleasantry, Mr. Brass consented to remain, and did remain, until a club of choice spirits called a Grand Jury (who were in the joke) summoned him to a trial before twelve other wags for perjury and fraud, who in their turn found him guilty with a most facetious joy, — nay, the very populace entered into the whim, and when Mr. Brass was moving in a hackney-coach towards the building where these wags assembled, saluted him with rotten eggs and carcases of kittens, and feigned to wish to tear him into shreds, which greatly increased the comicality of the thing, and made him relish it the more, no doubt.

To work this sportive vein still further, Mr. Brass, by his counsel, moved in arrest of judgment that he had been led to criminate himself, by assurances of safety and promises of pardon, and claimed the leniency which the law extends to such confiding natures as are thus deluded. After solemn argument, this point (with others of a technical nature, whose humorous extravagance it would be difficult to exaggerate) was referred to the judges for their decision, Sampson being meantime removed to his former quarters. Finally some of the points were given in Sampson's favor, and some against him ; and the upshot was, that, instead of being desired to travel for a time in foreign parts, he was permitted to grace the mother country under certain insignificant restrictions.

These were, that he should, for a term of years, reside in a spacious mansion where several other gentlemen

were lodged and boarded at the public charge, who went clad in a sober uniform of gray turned up with yellow, had their hair cut extremely short, and chiefly lived on gruel and light soup. It was also required of him that he should partake of their exercise of constantly ascending an endless flight of stairs; and, lest his legs, unused to such exertion, should be weakened by it, that he should wear upon one ankle an amulet or charm of iron. These conditions being arranged, he was removed one evening to his new abode, and enjoyed, in common with nine other gentlemen, and two ladies, the privilege of being taken to his place of retirement in one of Royalty's own carriages.

Over and above these trifling penalties, his name was erased and blotted out from the roll of attorneys; which erasure has been always held in these latter times to be a great degradation and reproach, and to imply the commission of some amazing villany — as indeed would seem to be the case, when so many worthless names remain among its better records, unmolested.

Of Sally Brass, conflicting rumors went abroad. Some said with confidence that she had gone down to the docks in male attire, and had become a female sailor; others darkly whispered that she had enlisted as a private in the second regiment of Foot Guards, and had been seen in uniform, and on duty, to wit, leaning on her musket and looking out of a sentry-box in St. James's Park, one evening. There were many such whispers as these in circulation; but the truth appears to be that, after a lapse of some five years (during which there is no direct evidence of her having been seen at all), two wretched people were more than once observed to crawl at dusk from the inmost recesses of St. Giles's, and to take their

way along the streets, with shuffling steps and cowering shivering forms, looking into the roads and kennels as they went in search of refuse food or disregarded offal. These forms were never beheld but in those nights of cold and gloom, when the terrible spectres, who lie at all other times in the obscene hiding-places of London, in archways, dark vaults and cellars, venture to creep into the streets; the embodied spirits of Disease, and Vice, and Famine. It was whispered by those who should have known, that these were Sampson and his sister Sally; and to this day, it is said, they sometimes pass, on bad nights, in the same loathsome guise, close at the elbow of the shrinking passenger.

The body of Quilp being found — though not until some days had elapsed — an inquest was held on it near the spot where it had been washed ashore. The general supposition was that he had committed suicide, and, this appearing to be favored by all the circumstances of his death, the verdict was to that effect. He was left to be buried with a stake through his heart in the centre of four lonely roads.

It was rumored afterwards that this horrible and barbarous ceremony had been dispensed with, and that the remains had been secretly given up to Tom Scott. But even here, opinion was divided; for some said Tom had dug them up at midnight, and carried them to a place indicated to him by the widow. It is probable that both these stories may have had their origin in the simple fact of Tom's shedding tears upon the inquest — which he certainly did, extraordinary as it may appear. He manifested, besides, a strong desire to assault the jury; and being restrained and conducted out of court, darkened its only window by standing on his head upon the

sill, until he was dexterously tilted upon his feet again by a cautious beadle.

Being cast upon the world by his master's death, he determined to go through it upon his head and hands, and accordingly began to tumble for his bread. Finding, however, his English birth an insurmountable obstacle to his advancement in this pursuit (notwithstanding that his art was in high repute and favor), he assumed the name of an Italian image lad, with whom he had become acquainted; and afterwards tumbled with extraordinary success, and to overflowing audiences.

Little Mrs. Quilp never quite forgave herself the one deceit that lay so heavy on her conscience, and never spoke or thought of it but with bitter tears. Her husband had no relations, and she was rich. He had made no will, or she would probably have been poor. Having married the first time at her mother's instigation, she consulted in her second choice nobody but herself. It fell upon a smart young fellow enough; and as he made it a preliminary condition that Mrs. Jiniwin should be thenceforth an out-pensioner, they lived together after marriage with no more than the average amount of quarrelling, and led a merry life upon the dead dwarf's money.

Mr. and Mrs. Garland, and Mr. Abel, went out as usual (except that there was a change in their household, as will be seen presently), and in due time the latter went into partnership with his friend the notary, on which occasion there was a dinner, and a ball, and great extent of dissipation. Unto this ball there happened to be invited the most bashful young lady that was ever seen, with whom Mr. Abel happened to fall in love. *How* it happened, or how they found it out, or which of them

first communicated the discovery to the other, nobody knows. But, certain it is that in course of time they were married; and equally certain it is that they were the happiest of the happy; and no less certain it is that they deserved to be so. And it is pleasant to write down that they reared a family; because any propagation of goodness and benevolence is no small addition to the aristocracy of nature, and no small subject of rejoicing for mankind at large.

The pony preserved his character for independence and principle down to the last moment of his life; which was an unusually long one, and caused him to be looked upon, indeed, as the very Old Parr of ponies. He often went to and fro with the little phaeton between Mr. Garland's and his son's, and, as the old people and the young were frequently together, had a stable of his own at the new establishment, into which he would walk of himself with surprising dignity. He condescended to play with the children, as they grew old enough to cultivate his friendship, and would run up and down the little paddock with them like a dog; but though he relaxed so far, and allowed them such small freedoms as caresses, or even to look at his shoes or hang on by his tail, he never permitted any one among them to mount his back or drive him; thus showing that even their familiarity must have its limits, and that there were points between them far too serious for trifling.

He was not unsusceptible of warm attachments in his later life, for when the good bachelor came to live with Mr. Garland upon the clergyman's decease, he conceived a great friendship for him, and amiably submitted to be driven by his hands without the least resistance. He did no work for two or three years before he died, but

lived in clover; and his last act (like a choleric old gentleman) was to kick his doctor.

Mr. Swiveller, recovering very slowly from his illness, and entering into the receipt of his annuity, bought for the Marchioness a handsome stock of clothes, and put her to school forthwith, in redemption of the vow he had made upon his fevered bed. After casting about for some time for a name which should be worthy of her, he decided in favor of Sophronia Sphynx, as being euphonious and genteel, and furthermore indicative of mystery. Under this title the Marchioness repaired, in tears, to the school of his selection, from which, as she soon distanced all competitors, she was removed before the lapse of many quarters to one of a higher grade. It is but bare justice to Mr. Swiveller to say, that, although the expenses of her education kept him in straitened circumstances for half a dozen years, he never slackened in his zeal, and always held himself sufficiently repaid by the accounts he heard (with great gravity) of her advancement, on his monthly visits to the governess, who looked upon him as a literary gentleman of eccentric habits, and of a most prodigious talent in quotation.

In a word, Mr. Swiveller kept the Marchioness at this establishment until she was, at a moderate guess, full nineteen years of age — good-looking, clever, and good-humored; when he began to consider seriously what was to be done next. On one of his periodical visits, while he was revolving this question in his mind, the Marchioness came down to him, alone, looking more smiling and more fresh than ever. Then, it occurred to him, but not for the first time, that if she would marry him, how comfortable they might be! So Richard asked her; whatever she said, it wasn't No; and they were married

in good earnest that day week, which gave Mr. Swiveller frequent occasion to remark at divers subsequent periods that there had been a young lady saving up for him after all.

A little cottage at Hampstead being to let, which had in its garden a smoking-box, the envy of the civilized world, they agreed to become its tenants; and, when the honeymoon was over, entered upon its occupation. To this retreat Mr. Chuckster repaired regularly every Sunday to spend the day — usually beginning with breakfast — and here he was the great purveyor of general news and fashionable intelligence. For some years he continued a deadly foe to Kit, protesting that he had a better opinion of him when he was supposed to have stolen the five-pound note, than when he was shown to be perfectly free of the crime; inasmuch as his guilt would have had in it something daring and bold, whereas his innocence was but another proof of a sneaking and crafty disposition. By slow degrees, however, he was reconciled to him in the end; and even went so far as to honor him with his patronage, as one who had in some measure reformed, and was therefore to be forgiven. But he never forgot or pardoned that circumstance of the shilling; holding that if he had come back to get another he would have done well enough, but that his returning to work out the former gift was a stain upon his moral character which no penitence or contrition could ever wash away.

Mr. Swiveller, having always been in some measure of a philosophic and reflective turn, grew immensely contemplative, at times, in the smoking-box, and was accustomed at such periods to debate in his own mind the mysterious question of Sophronia's parentage. Sophronia herself supposed she was an orphan; but Mr. Swiv-

eller, putting various slight circumstances together, often thought Miss Brass must know better than that; and, having heard from his wife of her strange interview with Quilp, entertained sundry misgivings whether that person, in his lifetime, might not also have been able to solve the riddle, had he chosen. These speculations, however, gave him no uneasiness; for Sophronia was ever a most cheerful, affectionate, and provident wife to him; and Dick (excepting for an occasional outbreak with Mr. Chuckster, which she had the good sense rather to encourage than oppose) was to her an attached and domesticated husband. And they played many hundred thousand games of cribbage together. And let it be added, to Dick's honor, that, though we have called her Sophronia, he called her the Marchioness from first to last; and that upon every anniversary of the day on which he found her in his sick room, Mr. Chuckster came to dinner, and there was great glorification.

The gamblers, Isaac List and Jowl, with their trusty confederate Mr. James Groves of unimpeachable memory, pursued their course with varying success, until the failure of a spirited enterprise in the way of their profession, dispersed them in different directions, and caused their career to receive a sudden check from the long and strong arm of the law. This defeat had its origin in the untoward detection of a new associate — young Frederick Trent — who thus became the unconscious instrument of their punishment and his own.

For the young man himself, he rioted abroad for a brief term, living by his wits — which means by the abuse of every faculty that worthily employed raises man above the beasts, and so degraded, sinks him far below them. It was not long before his body was recognized

by a stranger, who chanced to visit that hospital in Paris where the drowned are laid out to be owned; despite the bruises and disfigurements which were said to have been occasioned by some previous scuffle. But the stranger kept his own counsel until he returned home, and it was never claimed or cared for.

The young brother, or the single gentleman, for that designation is more familiar, would have drawn the poor school-master from his lone retreat, and made him his companion and friend. But the humble village teacher was timid of venturing into the noisy world, and had become fond of his dwelling in the old church-yard. Calmly happy in his school, and in the spot, and in the attachment of Her little mourner, he pursued his quiet course in peace; and was, through the righteous gratitude of his friend — let this brief mention suffice for that — a *poor* school-master no more.

That friend — single gentleman, or younger brother, which you will — had at his heart a heavy sorrow; but it bred in him no misanthropy or monastic gloom. He went forth into the world, a lover of his kind. For a long, long time, it was his chief delight to travel in the steps of the old man and the child (so far as he could trace them from her last narrative), to halt where they had halted, sympathize where they had suffered, and rejoice where they had been made glad. Those who had been kind to them, did not escape his search. The sisters at the school — they who were her friends, because themselves so friendless — Mrs. Jarley of the wax-work, Codlin, Short — he found them all; and trust me, the man who fed the furnace fire was not forgotten.

Kit's story, having got abroad, raised him up a host of friends, and many offers of provision for his future

life. He had no idea at first of ever quitting Mr. Garland's service; but, after serious remonstrance and advice from that gentleman, began to contemplate the possibility of such a change being brought about in time. A good post was procured for him, with a rapidity which took away his breath, by some of the gentlemen who had believed him guilty of the offence laid to his charge, and who had acted upon that belief. Through the same kind agency, his mother was secured from want, and made quite happy. Thus, as Kit often said, his great misfortune turned out to be the source of all his subsequent prosperity.

Did Kit live a single man all his days, or did he marry? Of course he married, and who should be his wife, but Barbara? And the best of it was, he married so soon that little Jacob was an uncle, before the calves of his legs, already mentioned in this history, had ever been encased in broadcloth pantaloons, — though that was not quite the best either, for of necessity the baby was an uncle too. The delight of Kit's mother and of Barbara's mother upon the great occasion is past all telling; finding they agreed so well on that, and on all other subjects, they took up their abode together, and were a most harmonious pair of friends from that time forth. And hadn't Astley's cause to bless itself for their all going together once a quarter — to the pit — and didn't Kit's mother always say, when they painted the outside, that Kit's last treat had helped to that, and wonder what the manager would feel if he but knew it as they passed his house!

When Kit had children six and seven years old, there was a Barbara among them, and a pretty Barbara she was. Nor was there wanting an exact fac-simile and

copy of little Jacob as he appeared in those remote times when they taught him what oysters meant. Of course there was an Abel, own godson to the Mr. Garland of that name; and there was a Dick, whom Mr. Swiveller did especially favor. The little group would often gather round him of a night and beg him to tell again that story of good Miss Nell who died. This, Kit would do; and when they cried to hear it, wishing it longer too, he would teach them how she had gone to Heaven, as all good people did; and how, if they were good like her, they might hope to be there too, one day, and to see and know her as he had done when he was quite a boy. Then, he would relate to them how needy he used to be, and how she had taught him what he was otherwise too poor to learn, and how the old man had been used to say "she always laughs at Kit;" at which they would brush away their tears, and laugh themselves to think that she had done so, and be again quite merry.

He sometimes took them to the street where she had lived; but new improvements had altered it so much, it was not like the same. The old house had been long ago pulled down, and a fine broad road was in its place. At first, he would draw with his stick a square upon the ground to show them where it used to stand. But, he soon became uncertain of the spot, and could only say it was thereabouts, he thought, and that these alterations were confusing.

Such are the changes which a few years bring about, and so do things pass away, like a tale that is told!

REPRINTED PIECES.

REPRINTED PIECES.

THE LONG VOYAGE.

When the wind is blowing and the sleet or rain is driving against the dark windows, I love to sit by the fire, thinking of what I have read in books of voyage and travel. Such books have had a strong fascination for my mind from my earliest childhood; and I wonder it should have come to pass that I never have been round the world, never have been shipwrecked, ice-environed, tomahawked, or eaten.

Sitting on my ruddy hearth in the twilight of New Year's Eve, I find incidents of travel rise around me from all the latitudes and longitudes of the globe. They observe no order or sequence, but appear and vanish as they will — "come like shadows, so depart." Columbus, alone upon the sea with his disaffected crew, looks over the waste of waters from his high station on the poop of his ship, and sees the first uncertain glimmer of the light, "rising and falling with the waves, like a torch in the bark of some fisherman," which is the shining star of a new world. Bruce is caged in Abyssinia, surrounded by the gory horrors which shall often startle him out of his sleep at home when years have passed away. Franklin,

come to the end of his unhappy overland journey — would that it had been his last! — lies perishing of hunger with his brave companions: each emaciated figure stretched upon its miserable bed without the power to rise: all, dividing the weary days between their prayers, their remembrances of the dear ones at home, and conversation on the pleasures of eating; the last-named topic being ever present to them, likewise, in their dreams. All the African travellers, wayworn, solitary and sad, submit themselves again to drunken, murderous, man-selling despots, of the lowest order of humanity; and Mungo Park, fainting under a tree and succored by a woman, gratefully remembers how his Good Samaritan has always come to him in woman's shape, the wide world over.

A shadow on the wall in which my mind's eye can discern some traces of a rocky sea-coast, recalls to me a fearful story of travel derived from that unpromising narrator of such stories, a parliamentary blue-book. A convict is its chief figure, and this man escapes with other prisoners from a penal settlement. It is an island, and they seize a boat, and get to the main land. Their way is by a rugged and precipitous sea-shore, and they have no earthly hope of ultimate escape, for the party of soldiers, dispatched by an easier course to cut them off, must inevitably arrive at their distant bourne long before them, and retake them if by any hazard they survive the horrors of the way. Famine, as they all must have foreseen, besets them early in their course. Some of the party die and are eaten; some are murdered by the rest and eaten. This one awful creature eats his fill, and sustains his strength, and lives on to be recaptured and taken back. The unrelatable experiences through

which he has passed have been so tremendous, that he is not hanged as he might be, but goes back to his old chained gang-work. A little time, and he tempts one other prisoner away, seizes another boat, and flies once more — necessarily in the old hopeless direction, for he can take no other. He is soon cut off, and met by the pursuing party, face to face, upon the beach. He is alone. In his former journey he acquired an inappeasable relish for his dreadful food. He urged the new man away, expressly to kill him and eat him. In the pockets on one side of his coarse convict-dress, are portions of the man's body, on which he is regaling; in the pockets on the other side is an untouched store of salted pork (stolen before he left the island) for which he has no appetite. He is taken back, and he is hanged. But I shall never see that sea-beach on the wall or in the fire, without him, solitary monster, eating as he prowls along, while the sea rages and rises at him.

Captain Bligh (a worse man to be entrusted with arbitrary power there could scarcely be) is handed over the side of the Bounty, and turned adrift on the wide ocean in an open boat, by order of Fletcher Christian one of his officers, at this very minute. Another flash of my fire, and "Thursday October Christian," five-and-twenty years of age, son of the dead and gone Fletcher by a savage mother, leaps aboard His Majesty's ship Briton, hove to off Pitcairn's Island; says his simple grace before eating, in good English; and knows that a petty little animal on board is called a dog, because in his childhood he had heard of such strange creatures from his father and the other mutineers, grown gray under the shade of the Bread-fruit trees, speaking of their lost country far away.

See the Halsewell, East Indiaman outward bound, driving madly on a January night towards the rocks near Seacombe, on the island of Purbeck! The captain's two dear daughters are aboard, and five other ladies. The ship has been driving many hours, has seven feet water in her hold, and her mainmast has been cut away. The description of her loss, familiar to me from my early boyhood, seems to be read aloud as she rushes to her destiny.

"About two in the morning of Friday the sixth of January, the ship still driving, and approaching very fast to the shore, Mr. Henry Meriton, the second mate, went again into the cuddy, where the captain then was. Another conversation taking place, Captain Pierce expressed extreme anxiety for the preservation of his beloved daughters, and earnestly asked the officer if he could devise any method of saving them. On his answering with great concern, that he feared it would be impossible, but that their only chance would be to wait for morning, the captain lifted up his hands in silent and distressful ejaculation.

"At this dreadful moment, the ship struck, with such violence as to dash the heads of those standing in the cuddy against the deck above them, and the shock was accompanied by a shriek of horror that burst at one instant from every quarter of the ship.

"Many of the seamen, who had been remarkably inattentive and remiss in their duty during great part of the storm, now poured upon deck, where no exertions of the officers could keep them, while their assistance might have been useful. They had actually skulked in their hammocks, leaving the working of the pumps and

other necessary labors to the officers of the ship, and the soldiers, who had made uncommon exertions. Roused by a sense of their danger, the same seamen, at this moment, in frantic exclamations, demanded of heaven and their fellow-sufferers that succor which their own efforts, timely made, might possibly have procured.

"The ship continued to beat on the rocks; and soon bilging, fell with her broadside towards the shore. When she struck, a number of the men climbed up the ensign-staff, under an apprehension of her immediately going to pieces.

"Mr. Meriton, at this crisis, offered to those unhappy beings the best advice which could be given; he recommended that all should come to the side of the ship lying lowest on the rocks, and singly to take the opportunities which might then offer, of escaping to the shore.

"Having thus provided, to the utmost of his power, for the safety of the desponding crew, he returned to the round-house, where, by this time, all the passengers, and most of the officers had assembled. The latter were employed in offering consolation to the unfortunate ladies; and, with unparalleled magnanimity, suffering their compassion for the fair and amiable companions of their misfortunes to prevail over the sense of their own danger.

"In this charitable work of comfort, Mr. Meriton now joined, by assurances of his opinion, that the ship would hold together till the morning, when all would be safe. Captain Pierce, observing one of the young gentlemen loud in his exclamations of terror, and frequently cry that the ship was parting, cheerfully bid him be quiet, remarking that though the ship should go to pieces, he would not, but would be safe enough.

"It is difficult to convey a correct idea of the scene of this deplorable catastrophe, without describing the place where it happened. The Halsewell struck on the rocks at a part of the shore where the cliff is of vast height, and rises almost perpendicular from its base. But at this particular spot, the foot of the cliff is excavated into a cavern of ten or twelve yards in depth, and of breadth equal to the length of a large ship. The sides of the cavern are so nearly upright, as to be of extremely difficult access; and the bottom is strewed with sharp and uneven rocks, which seem, by some convulsion of the earth, to have been detached from its roof.

"The ship lay with her broadside opposite to the mouth of this cavern, with her whole length stretched almost from side to side of it. But when she struck, it was too dark for the unfortunate persons on board to discover the real magnitude of their danger, and the extreme horror of such a situation.

"In addition to the company already in the round-house, they had admitted three black women and two soldiers' wives; who, with the husband of one of them, had been allowed to come in, though the seamen, who had tumultuously demanded entrance to get the lights, had been opposed and kept out by Mr. Rogers and Mr. Brimer, the third and fifth mates. The numbers there were, therefore, now increased to near fifty. Captain Pierce sat on a chair, a cot, or some other movable, with a daughter on each side, whom he alternately pressed to his affectionate breast. The rest of the melancholy assembly were seated on the deck, which was strewed with musical instruments, and the wreck of furniture and other articles.

"Here also Mr. Meriton, after having cut several wax-candles in pieces, and stuck them up in various parts of the round-house, and lighted up all the glass lanterns he could find, took his seat, intending to wait the approach of dawn; and then assist the partners of his dangers to escape. But, observing that the poor ladies appeared parched and exhausted, he brought a basket of oranges and prevailed on some of them to refresh themselves by sucking a little of the juice. At this time they were all tolerably composed, except Miss Mansel, who was in hysteric fits on the floor of the deck of the round-house.

"But on Mr. Meriton's return to the company, he perceived a considerable alteration in the appearance of the ship; the sides were visibly giving away; the deck seemed to be lifting, and he discovered other strong indications that she could not hold much longer together. On this account, he attempted to go forward to look out, but immediately saw that the ship had separated in the middle, and that the forepart having changed its position, lay rather farther out towards the sea. In such an emergency, when the next moment might plunge him into eternity, he determined to seize the present opportunity, and follow the example of the crew and the soldiers, who were now quitting the ship in numbers, and making their way to the shore, though quite ignorant of its nature and description.

"Among other expedients, the ensign-staff had been unshipped, and attempted to be laid between the ship's side and some of the rocks, but without success, for it snapped asunder before it reached them. However, by the light of a lantern, which a seaman handed through the sky-light of the round-house to the deck,

Mr. Meriton discovered a spar which appeared to be laid from the ship's side to the rocks, and on this spar he resolved to attempt his escape.

"Accordingly, lying down upon it, he thrust himself forward; however, he soon found that it had no communication with the rock; he reached the end of it and then slipped off, receiving a very violent bruise in his fall, and before he could recover his legs, he was washed off by the surge. He now supported himself by swimming, until a returning wave dashed him against the back part of the cavern. Here he laid hold of a small projection in the rock, but was so much benumbed that he was on the point of quitting it, when a seaman, who had already gained a footing, extended his hand, and assisted him until he could secure himself a little on the rock; from which he clambered on a shelf still higher, and out of the reach of the surf.

"Mr. Rogers, the third mate, remained with the captain and the unfortunate ladies and their companions nearly twenty minutes after Mr. Meriton had quitted the ship. Soon after the latter left the round-house, the captain asked what was become of him, to which Mr. Rogers replied, that he was gone on deck to see what could be done. After this, a heavy sea breaking over the ship, the ladies exclaimed, 'Oh poor Meriton! he is drowned! had he stayed with us he would have been safe!' and they all, particularly Miss Mary Pierce, expressed great concern at the apprehension of his loss.

"The sea was now breaking in at the forepart of the ship, and reached as far as the mainmast. Captain Pierce gave Mr. Rogers a nod, and they took a lamp and went together into the stern-gallery, where, after

viewing the rocks for some time, Captain Pierce asked Mr. Rogers if he thought there was any possibility of saving the girls; to which he replied, he feared there was none; for they could only discover the black face of the perpendicular rock, and not the cavern which afforded shelter to those who escaped. They then returned to the round-house, where Mr. Rogers hung up the lamp, and Captain Pierce sat down between his two daughters.

"The sea continuing to break in very fast, Mr. Macmanus, a midshipman, and Mr. Schutz, a passenger, asked Mr. Rogers what they could do to escape. 'Follow me,' he replied, and they all went into the stern-gallery, and from thence to the upper-quarter-gallery on the poop. While there, a very heavy sea fell on board, and the round-house gave way; Mr. Rogers heard the ladies shriek at intervals, as if the water reached them; the noise of the sea at other times drowning their voices.

"Mr. Brimer had followed him to the poop, where they remained together about five minutes, when on the breaking of this heavy sea, they jointly seized a hen-coop. The same wave which proved fatal to some of those below, carried him and his companion to the rock, on which they were violently dashed and miserably bruised.

"Here on the rock were twenty-seven men; but it now being low water, and as they were convinced that on the flowing of the tide all must be washed off, many attempted to get to the back or the sides of the cavern, beyond the reach of the returning sea. Scarcely more than six, besides Mr. Rogers and Mr. Brimer succeeded.

"Mr. Rogers, on gaining this station, was so nearly exhausted, that had his exertions been protracted only a few minutes longer, he must have sunk under them. He was now prevented from joining Mr. Meriton, by at least twenty men between them, none of whom could move, without the imminent peril of his life.

"They found that a very considerable number of the crew, seamen, and soldiers, and some petty officers, were in the same situation as themselves, though many who had reached the rocks below, perished in attempting to ascend. They could yet discern some part of the ship, and in their dreary station solaced themselves with the hopes of its remaining entire until daybreak; for, in the midst of their own distress, the sufferings of the females on board affected them with the most poignant anguish; and every sea that broke inspired them with terror for their safety.

"But, alas, their apprehensions were too soon realized! Within a very few minutes of the time that Mr. Rogers gained the rock, an universal shriek, which long vibrated in their ears, in which the voice of female distress was lamentably distinguished, announced the dreadful catastrophe. In a few moments all was hushed, except the roaring of the winds and the dashing of the waves; the wreck was buried in the deep, and not an atom of it was ever afterwards seen."

The most beautiful and affecting incident I know, associated with a shipwreck, succeeds this dismal story for a winter night. The Grosvenor, East Indiaman, homeward bound, goes ashore on the coast of Caffraria. It is resolved that the officers, passengers, and crew, in number one hundred and thirty-five souls, shall endeavor

to penetrate on foot, across trackless deserts, infested by wild beasts and cruel savages, to the Dutch settlements at the Cape of Good Hope. With this forlorn object before them, they finally separate into two parties — never more to meet on earth.

There is a solitary child among the passengers — a little boy of seven years old who has no relation there; and when the first party is moving away he cries after some member of it who has been kind to him. The crying of a child might be supposed to be a little thing to men in such great extremity; but it touches them, and he is immediately taken into that detachment.

From which time forth, this child is sublimely made a sacred charge. He is pushed, on a little raft, across broad rivers, by the swimming sailors; they carry him by turns through the deep sand and long grass (he patiently walking at all other times); they share with him such putrid fish as they find to eat; they lie down and wait for him when the rough carpenter, who becomes his especial friend, lags behind. Beset by lions and tigers, by savages, by thirst, by hunger, by death in a crowd of ghastly shapes, they never — O Father of all mankind, thy name be blessed for it! — forget this child. The captain stops exhausted, and his faithful coxswain goes back and is seen to sit down by his side, and neither of the two shall be any more beheld until the great last day; but, as the rest go on for their lives, they take the child with them. The carpenter dies of poisonous berries eaten in starvation; and the steward, succeeding to the command of the party, succeeds to the sacred guardianship of the child.

God knows all he does for the poor baby; how he

cheerfully carries him in his arms when he himself is weak and ill; how he feeds him when he himself is griped with want; how he folds his ragged jacket round him, lays his little worn face with a woman's tenderness upon his sunburnt breast, soothes him in his sufferings, sings to him as he limps along, unmindful of his own parched and bleeding feet. Divided for a few days from the rest, they dig a grave in the sand and bury their good friend the cooper — these two companions alone in the wilderness — and then the time comes when they both are ill and beg their wretched partners in despair, reduced and few in number now, to wait by them one day. They wait by them one day, they wait by them two days. On the morning of the third, they move very softly about, in making their preparations for the resumption of their journey; for, the child is sleeping by the fire, and it is agreed with one consent that he shall not be disturbed until the last moment. The moment comes, the fire is dying — and the child is dead.

His faithful friend, the steward, lingers but a little while behind him. His grief is great, he staggers on for a few days, lies down in the desert, and dies. But he shall be reunited in his immortal spirit — who can doubt it! — with the child, where he and the poor carpenter shall be raised up with the words, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these, ye have done it unto Me."

As I recall the dispersal and disappearance of nearly all the participators in this once famous shipwreck (a mere handful being recovered at last), and the legends that were long afterwards revived from time to time among the English officers at the Cape, of a white

woman with an infant, said to have been seen weeping outside a savage hut far in the interior, who was whisperingly associated with the remembrance of the missing ladies saved from the wrecked vessel, and who was often sought but never found, thoughts of another kind of travel come into my mind.

Thoughts of a voyager unexpectedly summoned from home, who travelled a vast distance, and could never return. Thoughts of this unhappy wayfarer in the depths of his sorrow, in the bitterness of his anguish, in the helplessness of his self-reproach, in the desperation of his desire to set right what he had left wrong, and do what he had left undone.

For, there were many many things he had neglected. Little matters while he was at home and surrounded by them, but things of mighty moment when he was at an immeasurable distance. There were many many blessings that he had inadequately felt, there were many trivial injuries that he had not forgiven, there was love that he had but poorly returned, there was friendship that he had too lightly prized; there were a million kind words that he might have spoken, a million kind looks that he might have given, uncountable slight easy deeds in which he might have been most truly great and good. O for a day (he would exclaim), for but one day to make amends! But the sun never shone upon that happy day, and out of his remote captivity he never came.

Why does this traveller's fate obscure, on New Year's Eve, the other histories of travellers with which my mind was filled but now, and cast a solemn shadow over me! Must I one day make his journey? Even so. Who shall say, that I may not then be tortured by such

late regrets: that I may not then look from my exile on my empty place and undone work? I stand upon a sea-shore, where the waves are years. They break and fall, and I may little heed them: but, with every wave the sea is rising, and I know that it will float me on this traveller's voyage at last.

THE BEGGING-LETTER WRITER.

The amount of money he annually diverts from wholesome and useful purposes in the United Kingdom, would be a set-off against the Window Tax. He is one of the most shameless frauds and impositions of this time. In his idleness, his mendacity, and the immeasurable harm he does to the deserving, — dirtying the stream of true benevolence, and muddling the brains of foolish justices, with inability to distinguish between the base coin of distress, and the true currency we have always among us, — he is more worthy of Norfolk Island than three fourths of the worst characters who are sent there. Under any rational system, he would have been sent there long ago.

I, the writer of this paper, have been, for some time, a chosen receiver of Begging Letters. For fourteen years, my house has been made as regular a Receiving House for such communications as any one of the great branch Post-Offices is for general correspondence. I ought to know something of the Begging-Letter Writer. He has besieged my door, at all hours of the day and night; he has fought my servant; he has lain in ambush for me, going out and coming in; he has followed me out of town into the country; he has appeared at provincial hotels, where I have been staying for only a few hours; he has written to me from immense distances, when I have been out of England. He has fallen sick; he has

died, and been buried; he has come to life again, and again departed from this transitory scene; he has been his own son, his own mother, his own baby, his idiot brother, his uncle, his aunt, his aged grandfather. He has wanted a great coat, to go to India in; a pound to set him up in life forever; a pair of boots, to take him to the coast of China; a hat, to get him into a permanent situation under Government. He has frequently been exactly seven-and-sixpence short of independence. He has had such openings at Liverpool — posts of great trust and confidence in merchants' houses, which nothing but seven-and-sixpence was wanting to him to secure — that I wonder he is not Mayor of that flourishing town at the present moment.

The natural phenomena of which he has been the victim, are of a most astounding nature. He has had two children, who have never grown up; who have never had anything to cover them at night; who have been continually driving him mad, by asking in vain for food; who have never come out of fevers and measles (which, I suppose, has accounted for his fuming his letters with tobacco smoke, as a disinfectant); who have never changed in the least degree, through fourteen long revolving years. As to his wife, what that suffering woman has undergone, nobody knows. She has always been in an interesting situation through the same long period, and has never been confined yet. His devotion to her has been unceasing. He has never cared for himself; *he* could have perished — he would rather, in short — but was it not his Christian duty as a man, a husband, and a father, to write begging letters when he looked at her? (He has usually remarked that he would call in the evening for an answer to this question.)

He has been the sport of the strangest misfortunes. What his brother has done to him would have broken anybody else's heart. His brother went into business with him, and ran away with the money; his brother got him to be security for an immense sum, and left him to pay it; his brother would have given him employment to the tune of hundreds a-year, if he would have consented to write letters on a Sunday; his brother enunciated principles incompatible with his religious views, and he could not (in consequence) permit his brother to provide for him. His landlord has never shown a spark of human feeling. When he put in that execution I don't know, but he has never taken it out. The broker's man has grown gray in possession. They will have to bury him some day.

He has been attached to every conceivable pursuit. He has been in the army, in the navy, in the church, in the law; connected with the press, the fine arts, public institutions, every description and grade of business. He has been brought up as a gentleman; he has been at every college in Oxford and Cambridge; he can quote Latin in his letters (but generally misspells some minor English word); he can tell you what Shakespeare says about begging, better than you know it. It is to be observed, that in the midst of his afflictions he always reads the newspapers; and rounds off his appeals with some allusion, that may be supposed to be in my way, to the popular subject of the hour.

His life presents a series of inconsistencies. Sometimes he has never written such a letter before. He blushes with shame. That is the first time; that shall be the last. Don't answer it, and let it be understood that, then, he will kill himself quietly. Sometimes (and

more frequently) he *has* written a few such letters. Then he encloses the answers, with an intimation that they are of inestimable value to him, and a request that they may be carefully returned. He is fond of enclosing something — verses, letters, pawnbrokers' duplicates, anything to necessitate an answer. He is very severe upon "the pampered minion of fortune," who refused him the half-sovereign referred to in the enclosure number two — but he knows me better.

He writes in a variety of styles; sometimes in low spirits; sometimes quite jocosely. When he is in low spirits, he writes down-hill, and repeats words — these little indications being expressive of the perturbation of his mind. When he is more vivacious, he is frank with me; he is quite the agreeable rattle. I know what human nature is, — who better? Well! He had a little money once, and he ran through it — as many men have done before him. He finds his old friends turn away from him now — many men have done that before him, too! Shall he tell me why he writes to me? Because he has no kind of claim upon me. He puts it on that ground, plainly; and begs to ask for the loan (as I know human nature) of two sovereigns, to be repaid next Tuesday six weeks, before twelve at noon.

Sometimes, when he is sure that I have found him out, and that there is no chance of money, he writes to inform me that I have got rid of him at last. He has enlisted into the Company's service, and is off directly — but he wants a cheese. He is informed by the serjeant that it is essential to his prospects in the regiment that he should take out a single-Gloucester cheese, weighing from twelve to fifteen pounds. Eight or nine shillings would buy it. He does not ask for money, after what

has passed; but if he calls at nine to-morrow morning, may he hope to find a cheese? And is there anything he can do to show his gratitude in Bengal?

Once, he wrote me rather a special letter proposing relief in kind. He had got into a little trouble by leaving parcels of mud done up in brown paper, at people's houses, on pretence of being a Railway-Porter, in which character he received carriage-money. This sportive fancy he expiated in the House of Correction. Not long after his release, and on a Sunday morning, he called with a letter (having first dusted himself all over), in which he gave me to understand that, being resolved to earn an honest livelihood, he had been travelling about the country with a cart of crockery. That he had been doing pretty well, until the day before, when his horse had dropped down dead near Chatham, in Kent. That this had reduced him to the unpleasant necessity of getting into the shafts himself, and drawing the cart of crockery to London — a somewhat exhausting pull of thirty miles. That he did not venture to ask again for money; but that if I would have the goodness *to leave him out a donkey*, he would call for the animal before breakfast!

At another time, my friend (I am describing actual experiences) introduced himself as a literary gentleman in the last extremity of distress. He had had a play accepted at a certain Theatre — which was really open; its representation was delayed by the indisposition of a leading actor — who was really ill; and he and his were in a state of absolute starvation. If he made his necessities known to the Manager of the Theatre, he put it to me to say what kind of treatment he might expect? Well! we got over that difficulty to our mutual satisfac-

tion. A little while afterwards he was in some other strait — I think Mrs. Southcote, his wife, was in extremity — and we adjusted that point too. A little while afterwards, he had taken a new house, and was going headlong to ruin for want of a water-butt. I had my misgivings about the water-butt, and did not reply to that epistle. But, a little while afterwards, I had reason to feel penitent for my neglect. He wrote me a few broken-hearted lines, informing me that the dear partner of his sorrows died in his arms last night at nine o'clock!

I dispatched a trusty messenger to comfort the bereaved mourner and his poor children: but the messenger went so soon, that the play was not ready to be played out; my friend was not at home, and his wife was in a most delightful state of health. He was taken up by the Mendicity Society (informally it afterwards appeared), and I presented myself at a London Police-Office with my testimony against him. The Magistrate was wonderfully struck by his educational acquirements, deeply impressed by the excellence of his letters, exceedingly sorry to see a man of his attainments there, complimented him highly on his powers of composition, and was quite charmed to have the agreeable duty of discharging him. A collection was made for the "poor fellow," as he was called in the reports, and I left the court with a comfortable sense of being universally regarded as a sort of monster. Next day, comes to me a friend of mine, the governor of a large prison, "Why did you ever go to the Police-Office against that man," says he, "without coming to me first? I know all about him and his frauds. He lodged in the house of one of my warders, at the very time when he first wrote to you; and then he was eating spring-lamb at eighteen-pence a

pound, and early asparagus at I don't know how much a bundle!" On that very same day, and in that very same hour, my injured gentleman wrote a solemn address to me, demanding to know what compensation I proposed to make him for his having passed the night in a "loathsome dungeon." And next morning, an Irish gentleman, a member of the same fraternity, who had read the case, and was very well persuaded I should be chary of going to that Police-Office again, positively refused to leave my door for less than a sovereign, and, resolved to besiege me into compliance, literally "sat down" before it for ten mortal hours. The garrison being well provisioned, I remained within the walls; and he raised the siege at midnight, with a prodigious alarum on the bell.

The Begging-Letter Writer often has an extensive circle of acquaintance. Whole pages of the Court Guide are ready to be references for him. Noblemen and gentlemen write to say there never was such a man for probity and virtue. They have known him, time out of mind, and there is nothing they wouldn't do for him. Somehow, they don't give him that one pound ten he stands in need of; but perhaps it is not enough — they want to do more, and his modesty will not allow it. It is to be remarked of his trade that it is a very fascinating one. He never leaves it; and those who are near to him become smitten with a love of it, too, and sooner or later set up for themselves. He employs a messenger — man, woman, or child. That messenger is certain ultimately to become an independent Begging-Letter Writer. His sons and daughters succeed to his calling, and write begging-letters when he is no more. He throws off the infection of begging-letter writing,

like the contagion of disease. What Sydney Smith so happily called "the dangerous luxury of dishonesty" is more tempting, and more catching, it would seem, in this instance than in any other.

He always belongs to a Corresponding-Society of Begging-Letter Writers. Any one who will, may ascertain this fact. Give money to day, in recognition of a begging-letter, — no matter how unlike a common begging-letter, — and for the next fortnight you will have a rush of such communications. Steadily refuse to give; and the begging-letters become Angels' visits, until the Society is from some cause or other in a dull way of business, and may as well try you as anybody else. It is of little use inquiring into the Begging-Letter Writer's circumstances. He may be sometimes accidentally found out, as in the case already mentioned (though that was not the first inquiry made); but apparent misery is always a part of his trade, and real misery very often is, in the intervals of spring-lamb and early asparagus. It is naturally an incident of his dissipated and dishonest life.

That the calling is a successful one, and that large sums of money are gained by it, must be evident to anybody who reads the Police Reports of such cases. But, prosecutions are of rare occurrence, relatively to the extent to which the trade is carried on. The cause of this, is to be found (as no one knows better than the Begging-Letter Writer, for it is a part of his speculation) in the aversion people feel to exhibit themselves as having been imposed upon, or as having weakly gratified their consciences with a lazy, flimsy substitute for the noblest of all virtues. There is a man at large, at the moment when this paper is preparing for the press (on

the 29th of April, 1850), and never once taken up yet, who, within these twelvemonths, has been probably the most audacious and the most successful swindler that even this trade has ever known. There has been something singularly base in this fellow's proceedings: it has been his business to write to all sorts and conditions of people, in the names of persons of high reputation and unblemished honor, professing to be in distress — the general admiration and respect for whom, has ensured a ready and generous reply.

Now, in the hope that the results of the real experience of a real person may do something more to induce reflection on this subject than any abstract treatise — and with a personal knowledge of the extent to which the Begging-Letter Trade has been carried on for some time, and has been for some time constantly increasing — the writer of this paper entreats the attention of his readers to a few concluding words. His experience is a type of the experience of many; some on a smaller; some on an infinitely larger scale. All may judge of the soundness or unsoundness of his conclusions from it.

Long doubtful of the efficacy of such assistance in any case whatever, and able to recall but one, within his whole individual knowledge, in which he had the least after-reason to suppose that any good was done by it, he was led, last autumn, into some serious considerations. The begging-letters flying about by every post, made it perfectly manifest, that a set of lazy vagabonds were interposed between the general desire to do something to relieve the sickness and misery under which the poor were suffering, and the suffering poor themselves. That many who sought to do some little to repair the social wrongs, inflicted in the way of prevent-

ible sickness and death upon the poor, were strengthening those wrongs, however innocently, by wasting money on pestilent knaves cumbering society. That imagination, — soberly following one of these knaves into his life of punishment in jail, and comparing it with the life of one of these poor in a cholera-stricken alley, or one of the children of one of these poor, soothed in its dying hour by the late lamented Mr. Drouet, — contemplated a grim farce, impossible to be presented very much longer before God or man. That the crowning miracle of all the miracles summed up in the New Testament, after the miracle of the blind seeing, and the lame walking, and the restoration of the dead to life, was the miracle that the poor had the Gospel preached to them. That while the poor were unnaturally and unnecessarily cut off by the thousand, in the prematurity of their age, or in the rottenness of their youth — for of flower or blossom such youth has none — the Gospel was NOT preached to them, saving in hollow and unmeaning voices. That of all wrongs, this was the first mighty wrong the Pestilence warned us to set right. And that no Post-Office Order to any amount, given to a Begging-Letter Writer for the quieting of an uneasy breast, would be presentable on the Last Great Day as anything towards it.

The poor never write these letters. Nothing could be more unlike their habits. The writers are public robbers; and we who support them are parties to their depredations. They trade upon every circumstance within their knowledge that affects us, public or private, joyful or sorrowful; they pervert the lessons of our lives; they change what ought to be our strength and

virtue, into weakness, and encouragement of vice. There is a plain remedy, and it is in our own hands. We must resolve, at any sacrifice of feeling, to be deaf to such appeals, and crush the trade.

There are degrees in murder. Life must be held sacred among us in more ways than one — sacred, not merely from the murderous weapon, or the subtle poison, or the cruel blow, but sacred from preventible diseases, distortions, and pains. That is the first great end we have to set against this miserable imposition. Physical life respected, moral life comes next. What will not content a Begging-Letter Writer for a week, would educate a score of children for a year. Let us give all we can; let us give more than ever. Let us do all we can; let us do more than ever. But let us give, and do, with a high purpose; not to endow the scum of the earth, to its own greater corruption, with the offals of our duty.

A CHILD'S DREAM OF A STAR.

THERE was once a child, and he strolled about a good deal and thought of a number of things. He had a sister, who was a child too, and his constant companion. These two used to wonder all day long. They wondered at the beauty of the flowers; they wondered at the height and blueness of the sky; they wondered at the depth of the bright water; they wondered at the goodness and the power of GOD who made the lovely world.

They used to say to one another, sometimes, Supposing all the children upon earth were to die, would the flowers, and the water, and the sky, be sorry? They believed they would be sorry. For, said they, the buds are the children of the flowers, and the little playful streams that gambol down the hill-sides are the children of the water; and the smallest bright specks playing at hide and seek in the sky all night, must surely be the children of the stars; and they would all be grieved to see their playmates, the children of men, no more.

There was one clear shining star that used to come out in the sky before the rest, near the church spire, above the graves. It was larger and more beautiful, they thought, than all the others, and every night they watched for it, standing hand in hand at a window.

Whoever saw it first, cried out, "I see the star!" And often they cried out both together, knowing so well when it would rise, and where. So they grew to be such friends with it, that, before lying down in their beds, they always looked out once again, to bid it good-night; and when they were turning round to sleep, they used to say, "God bless the star!"

But while she was still very young, oh very very young, the sister drooped, and came to be so weak that she could no longer stand in the window at night; and then the child looked sadly out by himself, and when he saw the star, turned round and said to the patient pale face on the bed, "I see the star!" and then a smile would come upon the face, and a little weak voice used to say, "God bless my brother and the star!"

And so the time came all too soon! when the child looked out alone, and when there was no face on the bed; and when there was a little grave among the graves, not there before; and when the star made long rays down towards him, as he saw it through his tears.

Now, these rays were so bright, and they seemed to make such a shining way from earth to Heaven, that when the child went to his solitary bed, he dreamed about the star; and dreamed that, lying where he was, he saw a train of people taken up that sparkling road by angels. And the star, opening, showed him a great world of light, where many more such angels waited to receive them.

All these angels, who were waiting, turned their beaming eyes upon the people who were carried up into the star; and some came out from the long rows in which they stood, and fell upon the people's necks, and kissed them tenderly, and went away with them down

avenues of light, and were so happy in their company, that lying in his bed he wept for joy.

But, there were many angels who did not go with them, and among them one he knew. The patient face that once had lain upon the bed was glorified and radiant, but his heart found out his sister among all the host.

His sister's angel lingered near the entrance of the star, and said to the leader among those who had brought the people thither, —

"Is my brother come?"

And he said "No."

She was turning hopefully away, when the child stretched out his arms, and cried "O, sister, I am here! Take me!" and then she turned her beaming eyes upon him, and it was night; and the star was shining into the room, making long rays down towards him as he saw it through his tears.

From that hour forth, the child looked out upon the star as on the home he was to go to, when his time should come; and he thought that he did not belong to the earth alone, but to the star too, because of his sister's angel gone before.

There was a baby born to be a brother to the child; and while he was so little that he never yet had spoken word, he stretched his tiny form out on his bed, and died.

Again the child dreamed of the opened star, and of the company of angels, and the train of people, and the rows of angels with their beaming eyes all turned upon those people's faces.

Said his sister's angel to the leader, —

"Is my brother come?"

And he said "Not that one, but another."

As the child beheld his brother's angel in her arms, he cried, "O, sister, I am here! Take me!" And she turned and smiled upon him, and the star was shining.

He grew to be a young man, and was busy at his books when an old servant came to him and said, —

"Thy mother is no more. I bring her blessing on her darling son!"

Again at night he saw the star, and all that former company. Said his sister's angel to the leader, —

"Is my brother come?"

And he said, "Thy mother!"

A mighty cry of joy went forth through all the star, because the mother was reunited to her two children. And he stretched out his arms and cried, "O, mother, sister, and brother, I am here! Take me!" And they answered him "Not yet," and the star was shining.

He grew to be a man, whose hair was turning gray, and he was sitting in his chair by the fireside, heavy with grief, and with his face bedewed with tears, when the star opened once again.

Said his sister's angel to the leader, "Is my brother come?"

And he said, "Nay, but his maiden daughter."

And the man who had been the child saw his daughter, newly lost to him, a celestial creature among those three, and he said "My daughter's head is on my sister's bosom, and her arm is round my mother's neck, and at her feet there is the baby of old time, and I can bear the parting from her, GOD be praised!"

And the star was shining.

Thus the child came to be an old man, and his once smooth face was wrinkled, and his steps were slow and

feeble, and his back was bent. And one night as he lay upon his bed, his children standing round, he cried, as he had cried so long ago, —

"I see the star!"

They whispered one another "He is dying."

And he said, "I am. My age is falling from me like a garment, and I move towards the star as a child. And O, my Father, now I thank thee that it has so often opened, to receive those dear ones who await me!"

And the star was shining; and it shines upon his grave.

OUR ENGLISH WATERING-PLACE.

In the Autumn-time of the year, when the great metropolis is so much hotter, so much noisier, so much more dusty or so much more water-carted, so much more crowded, so much more disturbing and distracting in all respects, than it usually is, a quiet sea-beach becomes indeed a blessed spot. Half awake and half asleep, this idle morning in our sunny window on the edge of a chalk cliff in the old-fashioned watering-place to which we are a faithful resorter, we feel a lazy inclination to sketch its picture.

The place seems to respond. Sky, sea, beach, and village, lie as still before us as if they were sitting for the picture. It is dead low-water. A ripple plays among the ripening corn upon the cliff, as if it were faintly trying from recollection to imitate the sea; and the world of butterflies hovering over the crop of radish-seed are as restless in their little way as the gulls are in their larger manner when the wind blows. But the ocean lies winking in the sunlight like a drowsy lion — its glassy waters scarcely curve upon the shore — the fishing-boats in the tiny harbor are all stranded in the mud — our two colliers (our watering-place has a maritime trade employing that amount of shipping) have not an inch of water within a quarter of a mile of them, and turn, exhausted, on their sides, like faint fish of an an-

tediluvian species. Rusty cables and chains, ropes and rings, undermost parts of posts and piles and confused timber-defences against the waves, lie strewn about, in a brown litter of tangled sea-weed and fallen cliff which looks as if a family of giants had been making tea here for ages, and had observed an untidy custom of throwing their tea-leaves on the shore.

In truth our watering-place itself has been left somewhat high and dry by the tide of years. Concerned as we are for its honor, we must reluctantly admit that the time when this pretty little semi-circular sweep of houses tapering off at the end of the wooden pier into a point in the sea, was a gay place, and when the light-house overlooking it shone at daybreak on company dispersing from public balls, is but dimly traditional now. There is a bleak chamber in our watering-place which is yet called the Assembly "Rooms," and understood to be available on hire for balls or concerts; and, some few seasons since, an ancient little gentleman came down and stayed at the hotel, who said he had danced there, in bygone ages, with the Honorable Miss Peepy, well known to have been the Beauty of her day and the cruel occasion of innumerable duels. But he was so old and shrivelled, and so very rheumatic in the legs, that it demanded more imagination than our watering-place can usually muster, to believe him; therefore, except the Master of the "Rooms" (who to this hour wears knee-breeches, and who confirmed the statement with tears in his eyes), nobody did believe in the little lame old gentleman, or even in the Honorable Miss Peepy, long deceased.

As to subscription balls in the Assembly Rooms of our watering-place now red-hot cannon balls are less im-

probable. Sometimes, a misguided wanderer of a Ventriloquist, or an Infant Phenomenon, or a Juggler, or somebody with an Orrery that is several stars behind the time, takes the place for a night, and issues bills with the name of his last town lined out, and the name of ours ignominously written in, but you may be sure this never happens twice to the same unfortunate person. On such occasions the discolored old Billiard Table that is seldom played at, (unless the ghost of the Honorable Miss Peepy plays at pool with other ghosts) is pushed into a corner, and benches are solemnly constituted into front seats, back seats, and reserved seats — which are much the same after you have paid — and a few dull candles are lighted — wind permitting — and the performer and the scanty audience play out a short match which shall make the other most low-spirited — which is usually a drawn game. After that, the performer instantly departs with maledictory expressions, and is never heard of more.

But the most wonderful feature of our Assembly Rooms, is, that an annual sale of "Fancy and other China," is announced here with mysterious constancy and perseverance. Where the china comes from, where it goes to, why it is annually put up to auction when nobody ever thinks of bidding for it, how it comes to pass that it is always the same china, whether it would not have been cheaper, with the sea at hand, to have thrown it away, say in eighteen hundred and thirty, are standing enigmas. Every year the bills come out, every year the Master of the Rooms gets into a little pulpit on a table, and offers it for sale, every year nobody buys it, every year it is put away somewhere until next year when it appears again as if the whole thing were a new idea.

We have a faint remembrance of an unearthly collection of clocks, purporting to be the work of Parisian and Genevese artists — chiefly bilious-faced clocks, supported on sickly white crutches, with their pendulums dangling like lame legs — to which a similar course of events occurred for several years, until they seemed to lapse away, of mere imbecility.

Attached to our Assembly Rooms is a library. There is a wheel of fortune in it, but it is rusty and dusty, and never turns. A large doll, with movable eyes, was put up to be raffled for, by five-and-twenty members at two shillings, seven years ago this autumn, and the list is not full yet. We are rather sanguine, now, that the raffle will come off next year. We think so, because we only want nine members, and should only want eight, but for number two having grown up since her name was entered, and withdrawn it when she was married. Down the street, there is a toy-ship of considerable burden, in the same condition. Two of the boys who were entered for that raffle have gone to India in real ships, since; and one was shot, and died in the arms of his sister's lover, by whom he sent his last words home.

This is the library for the Minerva Press. If you want that kind of reading, come to our watering-place. The leaves of the romances, reduced to a condition very like curl-paper, are thickly studded with notes in pencil: sometimes complimentary, sometimes jocose. Some of these commentators, like commentators in a more extensive way, quarrel with one another. One young gentleman who sarcastically writes "O!!!" after every sentimental passage, is pursued through his literary career by another, who writes "Insulting Beast!" Miss Julia Mills has read the whole collection of these

books. She has left marginal notes on the pages, as "Is not this truly touching? J. M." "How thrilling! J. M." "Entranced here by the Magician's potent spell. J. M." She has also italicized her favorite traits in the description of the hero, as "his hair, which was *dark* and *wavy*, clustered in *rich profusion* around a *marble brow*, whose lofty paleness bespoke the intellect within." It reminds her of another hero. She adds, "How like B. L.! Can this be mere coincidence? J. M."

You would hardly guess which is the main street of our watering-place, but you may know it by its being always stopped up with donkey-chaises. Whenever you come here, and see harnessed donkeys eating clover out of barrows drawn completely across a narrow thoroughfare, you may be quite sure you are in our High Street. Our Police you may know by his uniform, likewise by his never on any account interfering with anybody — especially the tramps and vagabonds. In our fancy shops we have a capital collection of damaged goods, among which the flies of countless summers "have been roaming." We are great in obsolete seals, and in faded pincushions, and in rickety camp-stools, and in exploded cutlery, and in miniature vessels, and in stunted little telescopes, and in objects made of shells that pretend not to be shells. Diminutive spades, barrows, and baskets, are our principal articles of commerce; but even they don't look quite new somehow. They always seem to have been offered and refused somewhere else, before they came down to our watering-place.

Yet, it must not be supposed that our watering-place is an empty place, deserted by all visitors except a few stanch persons of approved fidelity. On the contrary,

the chances are that if you came down here in August or September, you wouldn't find a house to lay your head in. As to finding either house or lodging of which you could reduce the terms, you could scarcely engage in a more hopeless pursuit. For all this, you are to observe that every season is the worst season ever known, and that the householding population of our watering-place are ruined regularly every autumn. They are like the farmers, in regard that it is surprising how much ruin they will bear. We have an excellent hotel — capital baths, warm, cold, and shower — first-rate bathing-machines — and as good butchers, bakers, and grocers, as heart could desire. They all do business, it is to be presumed, from motives of philanthropy — but it is quite certain that they are all being ruined. Their interest in strangers, and their politeness under ruin, bespeak their amiable nature. You would say so, if you only saw the baker helping a new-comer to find suitable apartments.

So far from being at a discount as to company, we are in fact what would be popularly called rather a nobby place. Some tip-top "Nobbs" come down occasionally — even Dukes and Duchesses. We have known such carriages to blaze among the donkey-chaises, as made beholders wink. Attendant on these equipages come resplendent creatures in plush and powder, who are sure to be stricken disgusted with the indifferent accommodation of our watering-place, and who, of an evening (particularly when it rains), may be seen very much out of drawing, in rooms far too small for their fine figures, looking discontentedly out of little back windows into by-streets. The lords and ladies get on well enough and quite good humoredly: but if you want to see the gor-

geous phenomena who wait upon them, at a perfect nonplus, you should come and look at the resplendent creatures with little back parlors for servants' halls, and turn-up bedsteads to sleep in, at our watering-place. You have no idea how they take it to heart.

We have a pier — a queer old wooden pier, fortunately without the slightest pretensions to architecture, and very picturesque in consequence. Boats are hauled up upon it, ropes are coiled all over it; lobster-pots, nets, masts, oars, spars, sails, ballast, and rickety capstans, make a perfect labyrinth of it. Forever hovering about this pier, with their hands in their pockets, or leaning over the rough bulwark it opposes to the sea, gazing through telescopes which they carry about in the same profound receptacles, are the boatmen of our watering-place. Looking at them, you would say that surely these must be the laziest boatmen in the world. They lounge about, in obstinate and inflexible pantaloons that are apparently made of wood, the whole season through. Whether talking together about the shipping in the Channel, or gruffly unbending over mugs of beer at the public-house, you would consider them the slowest of men. The chances are a thousand to one that you might stay here for ten seasons, and never see a boatman in a hurry. A certain expression about his loose hands, when they are not in his pockets, as if he were carrying a considerable lump of iron in each, without any inconvenience, suggests strength, but he never seems to use it. He has the appearance of perpetually strolling — running is too inappropriate a word to be thought of — to seed. The only subject on which he seems to feel any approach to enthusiasm, is pitch. He pitches everything he can lay hold of, — the pier, the palings, his boat,

his house, — when there is nothing else left he turns to and even pitches his hat, or his rough-weather clothing. Do not judge him by deceitful appearances. These are among the bravest and most skilful mariners that exist. Let a gale arise and swell into a storm, let a sea run that might appal the stoutest heart that ever beat, let the Light-boat on these dangerous sands throw up a rocket in the night, or let them hear through the angry roar the signal-guns of a ship in distress, and these men spring up into activity so dauntless, so valiant, and heroic, that the world cannot surpass it. Cavillers may object that they chiefly live upon the salvage of valuable cargoes. So they do, and God knows it is no great living that they get out of the deadly risks they run. But put that hope of gain aside. Let these rough fellows be asked, in any storm, who volunteers for the life-boat to save some perishing souls, as poor and empty-handed as themselves, whose lives the perfection of human reason does not rate at the value of a farthing each; and that boat will be manned, as surely and as cheerfully, as if a thousand pounds were told down on the weather-beaten pier. For this, and for the recollection of their comrades whom we have known, whom the raging sea has engulfed before their children's eyes in such brave efforts, whom the secret sand has buried, we hold the boatmen of our watering-place in our love and honor, and are tender of the fame they well deserve.

So many children are brought down to our watering-place that, when they are not out of doors, as they usually are in fine weather, it is wonderful where they are put: the whole village seeming much too small to hold them under cover. In the afternoons, you see no end

of salt and sandy little boots drying on upper window-sills. At bathing-time in the morning, the little bay re-echoes with every shrill variety of shriek and splash — after which, if the weather be at all fresh, the sands teem with small blue mottled legs. The sands are the children's great resort. They cluster there, like ants: so busy burying their particular friends, and making castles with infinite labor which the next tide overthrows, that it is curious to consider how their play, to the music of the sea, foreshadows the realities of their after lives.

It is curious, too, to observe a natural ease of approach that there seems to be between the children and the boatmen. They mutually make acquaintance, and take individual likings, without any help. You will come upon one of those slow heavy fellows sitting down patiently mending a little ship for a mite of a boy, whom he could crush to death by throwing his lightest pair of trousers on him. You will be sensible of the oddest contrast between the smooth little creature, and the rough man who seems to be carved out of hard-grained wood — between the delicate hand expectantly held out, and the immense thumb and finger that can hardly feel the rigging of thread they mend — between the small voice and the gruff growl — and yet there is a natural propriety in the companionship: always to be noted in confidence between a child and a person who has any merit of reality and genuineness: which is admirably pleasant.

We have a preventive station at our watering-place, and much the same thing may be observed — in a lesser degree, because of their official character — of the coast blockade; a steady, trusty, well-conditioned,

well-conducted set of men, with no misgiving about looking you full in the face, and with a quiet thorough-going way of passing along to their duty at night, carrying huge sou-wester clothing in reserve, that is fraught with all good prepossession. They are handy fellows — neat about their houses — industrious at gardening — would get on with their wives, one thinks, in a desert island — and people it, too, soon.

As to the naval officer of the station, with his hearty fresh face, and his blue eye that has pierced all kinds of weather, it warms our hearts when he comes into church on a Sunday, with that bright mixture of blue coat, buff waistcoat, black neck-kerchief, and gold epaulette, that is associated in the minds of all Englishmen with brave, unpretending, cordial, national service. We like to look at him in his Sunday state; and if we were First Lord (really possessing the indispensable qualification for the office of knowing nothing whatever about the sea), we would give him a ship to-morrow.

We have a church, by the by, of course — a hideous temple of flint, like a great petrified haystack. Our chief clerical dignitary, who, to his honor, has done much for education both in time and money, and has established excellent schools, is a sound, shrewd, healthy gentleman, who has got into little occasional difficulties with the neighboring farmers, but has had a pestilent trick of being right. Under a new regulation, he has yielded the church of our watering-place to another clergyman. Upon the whole we get on in church well. We are a little bilious sometimes, about these days of fraternization, and about nations arriving at a new and more unprejudiced knowledge of each other (which our

Christianity don't quite approve), but it soon goes off, and then we get on very well.

There are two dissenting chapels, besides, in our small watering-place; being in about the proportion of a hundred and twenty guns to a yacht. But the dissension that has torn us lately, has not been a religious one. It has arisen on the novel question of Gas. Our watering-place has been convulsed by the agitation, Gas or No Gas. It was never reasoned why No Gas, but there was a great No Gas party. Broadsides were printed and stuck about — a startling circumstance in our watering-place. The No Gas party rested content with chalking "No Gas!" and "Down with Gas!" and other such angry war-whoops, on the few back gates and scraps of wall which the limits of our watering-place afford; but the Gas party printed and posted bills, wherein they took the high ground of proclaiming against the No Gas party, that it was said Let there be light and there was light; and that not to have light (that is gas light) in our watering-place, was to contravene the great decree. Whether by these thunderbolts or not, the No Gas party were defeated; and in this present season we have had our handful of shops illuminated for the first time. Such of the No Gas party, however, as have got shops, remain in opposition and burn tallow — exhibiting in their windows the very picture of the sulkiness that punishes itself, and a new illustration of the old adage about cutting off your nose to be revenged on your face, in cutting off their gas to be revenged on their business.

Other population than we have indicated, our watering-place has none. There are a few old used-up boatmen who creep about in the sunlight with the help of

sticks, and there is a poor imbecile shoemaker who wanders his lonely life away among the rocks, as if he were looking for his reason — which he will never find. Sojourners in neighboring watering-places come occasionally in flys to stare at us, and drive away again as if they thought us very dull; Italian boys come, Punch comes, the Fantoccini come, the Tumblers come, the Ethiopians come; Glee-singers come at night, and hum and vibrate (not always melodiously) under our windows. But they all go soon, and leave us to ourselves again. We once had a travelling Circus and Wombwell's Menagerie at the same time. They both know better than ever to try it again; and the Menagerie had nearly razed us from the face of the earth in getting the elephant away — his caravan was so large, and the watering-place so small. We have a fine sea, wholesome for all people; profitable for the body, profitable for the mind. The poet's words are sometimes on its awful lips: —

> And the stately ships go on
> To their haven under the hill;
> But O for the touch of a vanish'd hand,
> And the sound of a voice that is still!
>
> Break, break, break,
> At the foot of thy crags, O sea!
> But the tender grace of a day that is dead
> Will never come back to me.

Yet it is not always so, for the speech of the sea is various, and wants not abundant resource of cheerfulness, hope, and lusty encouragement. And since I have been idling at the window here, the tide has risen. The boats are dancing on the bubbling water; the colliers are afloat again; the white-bordered waves rush in; the children

> Do chase the ebbing Neptune, and do fly him
> When he comes back;

the radiant sails are gliding past the shore, and shining on the far horizon; all the sea is sparkling, heaving, swelling up with life and beauty, this bright morning.

OUR FRENCH WATERING-PLACE.

HAVING earned, by many years of fidelity, the right to be sometimes inconstant to our English watering-place, we have dallied for two or three seasons with a French watering-place: once solely known to us as a town with a very long street, beginning with an abattoir and ending with a steamboat, which it seemed our fate to behold only at daybreak on winter mornings, when (in the days before continental railroads), just sufficiently awake to know that we were most uncomfortably asleep, it was our destiny always to clatter through it, in the coupé of the diligence from Paris, with a sea of mud behind us, and a sea of tumbling waves before. In relation to which latter monster, our mind's eye now recalls a worthy Frenchman in a seal-skin cap with a braided hood over it, once our travelling companion in the coupé aforesaid, who waking up with a pale and crumpled visage, and looking ruefully out at the grim row of breakers enjoying themselves fanatically on an instrument of torture called "the Bar," inquired of us whether we were ever sick at sea? Both to prepare his mind for the abject creature we were presently to become, and also to afford him consolation, we replied, "Sir, your servant is always sick when it is possible to be so." He returned, altogether uncheered by the bright example, "Ah, Heaven, but I am always sick, even when it is *im*possible to be so."

The means of communication between the French capital and our French watering-place are wholly changed since those days; but, the Channel remains unbridged as yet, and the old floundering and knocking about go on there. It must be confessed that saving in reasonable (and therefore rare) sea-weather, the act of arrival at our French watering-place from England is difficult to be achieved with dignity. Several little circumstances combine to render the visitor an object of humiliation. In the first place, the steamer no sooner touches the port, than all the passengers fall into captivity: being boarded by an overpowering force of Custom-house officers, and marched into a gloomy dungeon. In the second place, the road to this dungeon is fenced off with ropes breast-high, and outside those ropes all the English in the place who have lately been sea-sick and are now well, assemble in their best clothes to enjoy the degradation of their dilapidated fellow-creatures. "Oh, my gracious! how ill this one has been!" "Here's a damp one coming next!" "*Here's* a pale one!" "Oh! A'n't he green in the face, this next one!" Even we ourself (not deficient in natural dignity) have a lively remembrance of staggering up this detested lane one September day in a gale of wind, when we were received like an irresistible comic actor, with a burst of laughter and applause, occasioned by the extreme imbecility of our legs.

We were coming to the third place. In the third place, the captives, being shut up in the gloomy dungeon, are strained, two or three at a time, into an inner cell, to be examined as to passports; and across the doorway of communication, stands a military creature making a bar of his arm. Two ideas are generally

present to the British mind during these ceremonies: first, that it is necessary to make for the cell with violent struggles, as if it were a life-boat and the dungeon a ship going down; secondly, that the military creature's arm is a national affront, which the government at home ought instantly to "take up." The British mind and body becoming heated by these fantasies, delirious answers are made to inquiries, and extravagant actions performed. Thus Johnson persists in giving Johnson as his baptismal name, and substituting for his ancestral designation the national "Dam!" Neither can he by any means be brought to recognize the distinction between a portmanteau-key and a passport, but will obstinately persevere in tendering the one when asked for the other. This brings him to the fourth place, in a state of mere idiotcy; and when he is, in the fourth place, cast out at a little door into a howling wilderness of touters, he becomes a lunatic with wild eyes and floating hair until rescued and soothed. If friendless and unrescued, he is generally put into a railway omnibus and taken to Paris.

But, our French watering-place, when it is once got into, is a very enjoyable place. It has a varied and beautiful country around it, and many characteristic and agreeable things within it. To be sure, it might have fewer bad smells and less decaying refuse, and it might be better drained, and much cleaner in many parts, and therefore infinitely more healthy. Still, it is a bright, airy, pleasant, cheerful town; and if you were to walk down either of its three well-paved main streets, towards five o'clock in the afternoon, when delicate odors of cookery fill the air, and its hotel windows (it is full of hotels) give glimpses of long tables set out for dinner,

and made to look sumptuous by the aid of napkins folded fan-wise, you would rightly judge it to be an uncommonly good town to eat and drink in.

We have an old walled town, rich in cool public wells of water, on the top of a hill within and above the present business-town; and if it were some hundreds of miles farther from England, instead of being, on a clear day, within sight of the grass growing in the crevices of the chalk-cliffs of Dover, you would long ago have been bored to death about that town. It is more picturesque and quaint than half the innocent places which tourists, following their leader like sheep, have made impostors of. To say nothing of its houses with grave court-yards, its queer by-corners, and its many-windowed streets white and quiet in the sunlight, there is an ancient belfry in it that would have been in all the Annuals and Albums, going and gone, these hundred years, if it had but been more expensive to get at. Happily it has escaped so well, being only in our French watering-place, that you may like it of your own accord in a natural manner, without being required to go into convulsions about it. We regard it as one of the later blessings of our life, that BILKINS, the only authority on Taste, never took any notice that we can find out, of our French watering-place. Bilkins never wrote about it, never pointed out anything to be seen in it, never measured anything it it, always left it alone. For which relief, Heaven bless the town and the memory of the immortal Bilkins likewise!

There is a charming walk, arched and shaded by trees, on the old walls that form the four sides of this High Town, whence you get glimpses of the streets below, and changing views of the other town and of the

river, and of the hills and of the sea. It is made more agreeable and peculiar by some of the solemn houses that are rooted in the deep streets below, bursting into a fresher existence a-top, and having doors and windows, and even gardens, on these ramparts. A child going in at the court-yard gate of one of these houses, climbing up the many stairs, and coming out at the fourth-floor window, might conceive himself another Jack, alighting on enchanted ground from another bean-stalk. It is a place wonderfully populous in children; English children, with governesses reading novels as they walk down the shady lanes of trees, or nursemaids interchanging gossip on the seats; French children with their smiling bonnes in snow-white caps, and themselves — if little boys — in straw head-gear like bee-hives, work-baskets and church hassocks. Three years ago, there were three weazen old men, one bearing a frayed red ribbon in his threadbare button-hole, always to be found walking together among these children, before dinner-time. If they walked for an appetite, they doubtless lived en pension — were contracted for — otherwise their poverty would have made it a rash action. They were stooping, blear-eyed, dull old men, slip-shod and shabby, in long-skirted short-waisted coats and meagre trousers, and yet with a ghost of gentility hovering in their company. They spoke little to each other, and looked as if they might have been politically discontented if they had had vitality enough. Once, we overhead red-ribbon feebly complain to the other two that somebody, or something, was "a Robber"; and then they all three set their mouths so that they would have ground their teeth if they had had any. The ensuing winter gathered red-ribbon unto the great company of faded ribbons, and

next year the remaining two were there — getting themselves entangled with hoops and dolls — familiar mysteries to the children — probably in the eyes of most of them, harmless creatures who had never been like children, and whom children could never be like. Another winter came, and another old man went, and so, this present year, the last of the triumvirate left off walking — it was no good, now — and sat by himself on a little solitary bench, with the hoops and the dolls as lively as ever all about him.

In the Place d'Armes of this town, a little decayed market is held, which seems to slip through the old gateway, like water, and go rippling down the hill, to mingle with the murmuring market, in the lower town, and get lost in its movement and bustle. It is very agreeable on an idle summer morning to pursue this market-stream from the hill-top. It begins dozingly and dully, with a few sacks of corn; starts into a surprising collection of boots and shoes; goes brawling down the hill in a diversified channel of old cordage, old iron, old crockery, old clothes civil and military, old rags, new cotton goods, flaming prints of saints, little looking-glasses, and incalculable lengths of tape; dives into a backway, keeping out of sight for a little while, as streams will, or only sparkling for a moment in the shape of a market drinking-shop; and suddenly reappears behind the great church, shooting itself into a bright confusion of white-capped women and blue-bloused men, poultry, vegetables, fruits, flowers, pots, pans, praying-chairs, soldiers, country butter, umbrellas and other sun-shades, girl-porters waiting to be hired with baskets at their backs, and one weazen little old man in a cocked hat, wearing a cuirass of drinking-glasses and carrying on his shoulder a crim-

son temple fluttering with flags, like a glorified pavior's rammer without the handle, who rings a little bell in all parts of the scene, and cries his cooling drink Hola, Hola, Ho-o-o! in a shrill cracked voice that somehow makes itself heard, above all the chaffering and vending hum. Early in the afternoon, the whole course of the stream is dry. The praying-chairs are put back in the church, the umbrellas are folded up, the unsold goods are carried away, the stalls and stands disappear, the square is swept, the hackney-coaches lounge there to be hired, and on all the country roads (if you walk about, as much as we do) you will see the peasant women, always neatly and comfortably dressed, riding home, with the pleasantest saddle-furniture of clean milk-pails, bright butter-kegs, and the like, on the jolliest little donkeys in the world.

We have another market in our French watering-place — that is to say, a few wooden hutches in the open street, down by the Port — devoted to fish. Our fishing-boats are famous everywhere; and our fishing people, though they love lively colors and taste is neutral (see Bilkins), are among the most picturesque people we ever encountered. They have not only a Quarter of their own in the town itself, but they occupy whole villages of their own on the neighboring cliffs. Their churches and chapels are their own; they consort with one another, they intermarry among themselves, their customs are their own, and their costume is their own and never changes. As soon as one of their boys can walk, he is provided with a long bright red night-cap; and one of their men would as soon think of going afloat without his head, as without that indispensable appendage to it. Then, they wear the noblest boots, with the hugest tops

— flapping and bulging over anyhow; above which, they encase themselves in such wonderful overalls and petticoat trousers, made to all appearance of tarry old sails, so additionally stiffened with pitch and salt, that the wearers have a walk of their own, and go straddling and swinging about, among the boats and barrels and nets and rigging, a sight to see. Then, their younger women, by dint of going down to the sea barefoot, to fling their baskets into the boats as they come in with the tide, and bespeak the first fruits of the haul with propitiatory promises to love and marry that dear fisherman who shall fill that basket like an Angel, have the finest legs ever carved by Nature in the brightest mahogany, and they walk like Juno. Their eyes, too, are so lustrous that their long gold ear-rings turn dull beside those brilliant neighbors; and when they are dressed, what with these beauties, and their fine fresh faces, and their many petticoats — striped petticoats, red petticoats, blue petticoats, always clean and smart, and never too long — and their home-made stockings, mulberry-colored, blue, brown, purple, lilac — which the older women, taking care of the Dutch-looking children, sit in all sorts of places knitting, knitting, knitting, from morning to night — and what with their little saucy bright blue jackets, knitted too, and fitting close to their handsome figures; and what with the natural grace with which they wear the commonest cap, or fold the commonest handkerchief round their luxuriant hair — we say, in a word and out of breath, that taking all these premises into our consideration, it has never been a matter of the least surprise to us that we have never once met, in the corn-fields, on the dusty roads, by the breezy windmills, on the plots of short sweet grass overhanging the sea — anywhere — a

young fisherman and fisherwoman of our French watering-place together, but the arm of that fisherman has invariably been, as a matter of course and without any absurd attempt to disguise so plain a necessity, round the neck or waist of that fisherwoman. And we have had no doubt whatever, standing looking at their up-hill streets, house rising above house, and terrace above terrace, and bright garments here and there lying sunning on rough stone parapets, that the pleasant mist on all such objects, caused by their being seen through the brown nets hung across on poles to dry, is, in the eyes of every true young fisherman, a mist of love and beauty, setting off the goddess of his heart.

Moreover it is to be observed that these are an industrious people, and a domestic people, and an honest people. And though we are aware that at the bidding of Bilkins it is our duty to fall down and worship the Neapolitans, we make bold very much to prefer the fishing people of our French watering-place — especially since our last visit to Naples within these twelvemonths, when we found only four conditions of men remaining in the whole city: to wit, lazzaroni, priests, spies, and soldiers, and all of them beggars; the paternal government having banished all its subjects except the rascals.

But we can never henceforth separate our French watering-place from our own landlord of two summers, M. Loyal Devasseur, citizen and town-councillor. Permit us to have the pleasure of presenting M. Loyal Devasseur.

His own family name is simply Loyal; but, as he is married, and as in that part of France a husband always adds to his own name the family name of his wife, he writes himself Loyal Devasseur. He owns a compact

little estate of some twenty or thirty acres on a lofty hill-side, and on it he has built two country-houses which he lets furnished. They are by many degrees the best houses that are so let near our French watering-place; we have had the honor of living in both, and can testify. The entrance-hall of the first we inhabited, was ornamented with a plan of the estate, representing it as about twice the size of Ireland; insomuch that when we were yet new to the Property (M. Loyal always speaks of it as "la propriété") we went three miles straight on end, in search of the bridge of Austerlitz — which we afterwards found to be immediately outside the window. The Chateau of the Old Guard, in another part of the grounds, and, according to the plan, about two leagues from the little dining-room, we sought in vain for a week, until, happening one evening to sit upon a bench in the forest (forest in the plan), a few yards from the house-door, we observed at our feet, in the ignominious circumstances of being upside down and greenly rotten, the Old Guard himself: that is to say, the painted effigy of a member of that distinguished corps, seven feet high, and in the act of carrying arms, who had had the misfortune to be blown down in the previous winter. It will be perceived that M. Loyal is a stanch admirer of the great Napoleon. He is an old soldier himself — captain of the National Guard, with a handsome gold vase on his chimney-piece, presented to him by his company — and his respect for the memory of the illustrious general is enthusiastic. Medallions of him, portraits of him, busts of him, pictures of him, are thickly sprinkled all over the property. During the first month of our occupation, it was our affliction to be constantly knocking down Napoleon: if we touched a shelf in a dark corner, he top-

pled over with a crash; and every door we opened, shook him to the soul. Yet M. Loyal is not a man of mere castles in the air, or, as he would say, in Spain. He has a specially practical, contriving, clever, skilful eye and hand. His houses are delightful. He unites French elegance and English comfort, in a happy manner quite his own. He has an extraordinary genius for making tasteful little bedrooms in angles of his roofs, which an Englishman would as soon think of turning to any account, as he would think of cultivating the Desert. We have ourself reposed deliciously in an elegant chamber of M. Loyal's construction, with our head as nearly in the kitchen chimney-pot as we can conceive it likely for the head of any gentleman, not by profession a Sweep, to be. And, into whatsoever strange nook M. Loyal's genius penetrates, it, in that nook, infallibly constructs a cupboard and a row of pegs. In either of our houses, we could have put away the knapsacks and hung up the hats of the whole regiment of Guides.

Aforetime, M. Loyal was a tradesman in the town. You can transact business with no present tradesman in the town, and give your card "chez M. Loyal," but a brighter face shines upon you directly. We doubt if there is, ever was, or ever will be, a man so universally pleasant in the minds of people as M. Loyal is in the minds of the citizens of our French watering-place. They rub their hands and laugh when they speak of him. Ah, but he is such a good child, such a brave boy, such a generous spirit, that Monsieur Loyal! It is the honest truth. M. Loyal's nature is the nature of a gentleman. He cultivates his ground with his own hands (assisted by one little laborer, who falls

into a fit now and then); and he digs and delves from morn to eve in prodigious perspirations — "works always," as he says — but, cover him with dust, mud, weeds, water, any stains you will, you never can cover the gentleman in M. Loyal. A portly, upright, broad-shouldered, brown-faced man, whose soldierly bearing gives him the appearance of being taller than he is, look into the bright eye of M. Loyal, standing before you in his working blouse and cap, not particularly well shaved, and, it may be, very earthy, and you shall discern in M. Loyal a gentleman whose true politeness is in grain, and confirmation of whose word by his bond you would blush to think of. Not without reason is M. Loyal when he tells that story, in his own vivacious way, of his travelling to Fulham, near London, to buy all these hundreds and hundreds of trees you now see upon the Property, then a bare, bleak hill; and of his sojourning in Fulham three months; and of his jovial evenings with the market-gardeners; and of the crowning banquet before his departure, when the market-gardeners rose as one man, clinked their glasses all together (as the custom at Fulham is), and cried, "Vive Loyal!"

M. Loyal has an agreeable wife, but no family; and he loves to drill the children of his tenants, or run races with them, or do anything with them, or for them, that is good-natured. He is of a highly convivial temperament, and his hospitality is unbounded. Billet a soldier on him, and he is delighted. Five-and-thirty soldiers had M. Loyal billeted on him this present summer, and they all got fat and red-faced in two days. It became a legend among the troops that whosoever got billeted on M. Loyal rolled in clover; and so it fell

out that the fortunate man who drew the billet "M. Loyal Devasseur" always leaped into the air, though in heavy marching order. M. Loyal cannot bear to admit anything that might seem by any implication to disparage the military profession. We hinted to him once, that we were conscious of a remote doubt arising in our mind, whether a sou a day for pocket-money, tobacco, stockings, drink, washing, and social pleasures in general, left a very large margin for a soldier's enjoyment. Pardon! said Monsieur Loyal, rather wincing. It was not a fortune, but — à la bonne heure — it was better than it used to be! What, we asked him on another occasion, were all those neighboring peasants, each living with his family in one room, and each having a soldier (perhaps two) billeted on him every other night, required to provide for those soldiers? "Faith!" said M. Loyal, reluctantly; "a bed, monsieur, and fire to cook with, and a candle. And they share their supper with those soldiers. It is not possible that they could eat alone." — "And what allowance do they get for this?" said we. Monsieur Loyal drew himself up taller, took a step back, laid his hand upon his breast, and said, with majesty, as speaking for himself and all France, "Monsieur, it is a contribution to the State!"

It is never going to rain, according to M. Loyal. When it is impossible to deny that it is now raining in torrents, he says it will be fine — charming — magnificent — to-morrow. It is never hot on the Property, he contends. Likewise it is never cold. The flowers, he says, come out, delighting to grow there; it is like Paradise this morning; it is like the Garden of Eden. He is a little fanciful in his language; smilingly observ-

ing of Madame Loyal, when she is absent at vespers, that she is "gone to her salvation" — allée à son salut. He has a great enjoyment of tobacco, but nothing would induce him to continue smoking face to face with a lady. His short black pipe immediately goes into his breast pocket, scorches his blouse, and nearly sets him on fire. In the Town Council and on occasions of ceremony, he appears in a full suit of black, with a waistcoat of magnificent breadth across the chest, and a shirt-collar of fabulous proportions. Good M. Loyal! Under blouse or waistcoat, he carries one of the gentlest hearts that beat in a nation teeming with gentle people. He has had losses, and has been at his best under them. Not only the loss of his way by night in the Fulham times — when a bad subject of an Englishman, under pretence of seeing him home, took him into all the night public-houses, drank "arfanarf" in every one at his expense, and finally fled, leaving him shipwrecked at Cleefeeway, which we apprehend to be Ratcliffe Highway — but heavier losses than that. Long ago, a family of children and a mother were left in one of his houses, without money, a whole year. M. Loyal — anything but as rich as we wish he had been — had not the heart to say "you must go;" so they stayed on and stayed on, and paying-tenants who would have come in couldn't come in, and at last they managed to get helped home across the water, and M. Loyal kissed the whole group, and said "Adieu, my poor infants!" and sat down in their deserted salon and smoked his pipe of peace. — "The rent, M. Loyal?" "Eh! well! The rent!" M. Loyal shakes his head. "Le bon Dieu," says M. Loyal presently, "will recompense me," and he laughs and smokes his pipe of peace. May he smoke it

on the Property, and not be recompensed, these fifty years!

There are public amusements in our French watering-place, or it would not be French. They are very popular, and very cheap. The sea-bathing — which may rank as the most favored daylight entertainment, inasmuch as the French visitors bathe all day long, and seldom appear to think of remaining less than an hour at a time in the water — is astoundingly cheap. Omnibuses convey you, if you please, from a convenient part of the town to the beach and back again; you have a clean and comfortable bathing-machine, dress, linen, and all appliances; and the charge for the whole is half a franc, or fivepence. On the pier, there is usually a guitar, which seems presumptuously enough to set its tinkling against the deep hoarseness of the sea, and there is always some boy or woman who sings, without any voice, little songs without any tune: the strain we have most frequently heard being an appeal to "the sportsman" not to bag that choicest of game, the swallow. For bathing purposes, we have also a subscription establishment with an esplanade, where people lounge about with telescopes, and seem to get a good deal of weariness for their money; and we have also an association of individual machine-proprietors combined against this formidable rival. M. Féroce, our own particular friend in the bathing line, is one of these. How he ever came by his name, we cannot imagine. He is as gentle and polite a man as M. Loyal Devasseur himself; immensely stout withal, and of a beaming aspect. M. Féroce has saved so many people from drowning, and has been decorated with so many medals in consequence, that his stoutness seems a special dispensation

of Providence to enable him to wear them; if his girth were the girth of an ordinary man, he could never hang them on, all at once. It is only on very great occasions that M. Féroce displays his shining honors. At other times they lie by, with rolls of manuscript testifying to the causes of their presentation, in a huge glass case in the red-sofa'd salon of his private residence on the beach, where M. Féroce also keeps his family pictures, his portraits of himself as he appears both in bathing life and in private life, his little boats that rock by clock-work, and his other ornamental possessions.

Then, we have a commodious and gay theatre — or had, for it is burned down now — where the opera was always preceded by a vaudeville, in which (as usual) everybody, down to the little old man with the large hat and the little cane and tassel, who always played either my Uncle or my Papa, suddenly broke out of the dialogue into the mildest vocal snatches, to the great perplexity of unaccustomed strangers from Great Britain, who never could make out when they were singing and when they were talking — and indeed it was pretty much the same. But, the caterers in the way of entertainment to whom we are most beholden, are the Society of Well-doing, who are active all the summer, and give the proceeds of their good works to the poor. Some of the most agreeable fêtes they contrive, are announced as "Dedicated to the children;" and the taste with which they turn a small public enclosure into an elegant garden beautifully illuminated; and the thorough-going heartiness and energy with which they personally direct the childish pleasures; are supremely delightful. For fivepence a head, we have on these occasions donkey races with English "Jokeis," and other rustic sports; lotteries

for toys; roundabouts, dancing on the grass to the music of an admirable band, fire-balloons, and fireworks. Further, almost every week all through the summer — never mind, now, on what day of the week — there is a fête in some adjoining village (called in that part of the country a Ducasse), where the people — really *the people* — dance on the green turf in the open air, round a little orchestra, that seems itself to dance, there is such an airy motion of flags and streamers all about it. And we do not suppose that between the Torrid Zone and the North Pole there are to be found male dancers with such astonishingly loose legs, furnished with so many joints in wrong places, utterly unknown to Professor Owen, as those who here disport themselves. Sometimes, the fête appertains to a particular trade; you will see among the cheerful young women at the joint Ducasse of the milliners and tailors, a wholesome knowledge of the art of making common and cheap things uncommon and pretty, by good sense and good taste, that is a practical lesson to any rank of society in a whole island we could mention. The oddest feature of these agreeable scenes is the everlasting Roundabout (we preserve an English word wherever we can, as we are writing the English language), on the wooden horses of which machine grown-up people of all ages are wound round and round with the utmost solemnity, while the proprietor's wife grinds an organ, capable of only one tune, in the centre.

As to the boarding-houses of our French watering-place, they are Legion, and would require a distinct treatise. It is not without a sentiment of national pride that we believe them to contain more bores from the shores of Albion than all the clubs in London. As you walk timidly in their neighborhood, the very neckcloths

and hats of your elderly compatriots cry to you from the stones of the streets, "we are bores — avoid us!" We have never overheard at street corners such lunatic scraps of political and social discussion as among these dear countrymen of ours. They believe everything that is impossible and nothing that is true. They carry rumors, and ask questions, and make corrections and improvements on one another, staggering to the human intellect. And they are forever rushing into the English library, propounding such incomprehensible paradoxes to the fair mistress of that establishment, that we beg to recommend her to her Majesty's gracious consideration as a fit object for a pension.

The English form a considerable part of the population of our French watering-place, and are deservedly addressed and respected in many ways. Some of the surface-addresses to them are odd enough, as when a laundress puts a placard outside her house announcing her possession of that curious British instrument a "Mingle;" or when a tavern-keeper provides accommodation for the celebrated English game of "Nokemdon." But, to us, it is not the least pleasant feature of our French watering-place that a long and constant fusion of the two great nations there, has taught each to like the other, and to learn from the other, and to rise superior to the absurd prejudices that have lingered among the weak and ignorant in both countries equally.

Drumming and trumpeting of course go on forever in our French watering-place. Flag-flying is at a premium, too; but, we cheerfully avow that we consider a flag a very pretty object, and that we take such outward signs of innocent liveliness to our heart of hearts. The people, in the town and in the country, are a busy peo-

ple who work hard; they are sober, temperate, good-humored, light-hearted, and generally remarkable for their engaging manners. Few just men, not immoderately bilious, could see them in their recreations without very much respecting the character that is so easily, so harmlessly, and so simply, pleased.

BILL-STICKING.

If I had an enemy whom I hated — which Heaven forbid! — and if I knew of something that sat heavy on his conscience, I think I would introduce that something into a Posting Bill, and place a large impression in the hands of an active sticker. I can scarcely imagine a more terrible revenge. I should haunt him, by this means, night and day. I do not mean to say that I would publish his secret, in red letters two feet high, for all the town to read: I would darkly refer to it. It should be between him, and me, and the Posting-Bill. Say, for example, that, at a certain period of his life, my enemy had surreptitiously possessed himself of a key. I would then embark my capital in the lock business, and conduct that business on the advertising principle. In all my placards and advertisements, I would throw up the line Secret Keys. Thus, if my enemy passed an uninhabited house, he would see his conscience glaring down on him from the parapets, and peeping up at him from the cellars. If he took a dead wall in his walk, it would be alive with reproaches. If he sought refuge in an omnibus, the panels thereof would become Belshazzar's palace to him. If he took boat, in a wild endeavor to escape, he would see the fatal words lurking under the arches of the bridges over the Thames. If he walked the streets with downcast eyes, he would recoil from the very stones of the pave-

ment, made eloquent by lampblack lithograph. If he drove or rode, his way would be blocked up, by enormous vans, each proclaiming the same words over and over again from its whole extent of surface. Until, having gradually grown thinner and paler, and having at last totally rejected food, he would miserably perish, and I should be revenged. This conclusion I should, no doubt, celebrate by laughing a hoarse laugh in three syllables, and folding my arms tight upon my chest agreeably to most of the examples of glutted animosity that I have had an opportunity of observing in connection with the Drama — which, by-the-by, as involving a good deal of noise, appears to me to be occasionally confounded with the Drummer.

The foregoing reflections presented themselves to my mind, the other day, as I contemplated (being newly come to London from the East Riding of Yorkshire, on a house-hunting expedition for next May), an old warehouse which rotting paste and rotting paper had brought down to the condition of an old cheese. It would have been impossible to say, on the most conscientious survey, how much of its front was brick and mortar, and how much decaying and decayed plaster. It was so thickly encrusted with fragments of bills, that no ship's keel after a long voyage could be half so foul. All traces of the broken windows were billed out, the doors were billed across, the waterspout was billed over. The building was shored up to prevent its tumbling into the street; and the very beams erected against it, were less wood than paste and paper, they had been so continually posted and reposted. The forlorn dregs of old posters so encumbered this wreck, that there was no hold for new posters, and the stickers had abandoned the place in

despair, except one enterprising man who had hoisted the last masquerade to a clear spot near the level of the stack of chimneys where it waved and drooped like a shattered flag. Below the rusty cellar-grating, crumpled remnants of old bills torn down, rotted away in wasting heaps of fallen leaves. Here and there, some of the thick rind of the house had peeled off in strips, and fluttered heavily down, littering the street; but, still, below these rents and gashes, layers of decomposing posters showed themselves, as if they were interminable. I thought the building could never even be pulled down, but in one adhesive heap of rottenness and poster. As to getting in — I don't believe that if the Sleeping Beauty and her Court had been so billed up, the young Prince could have done it.

Knowing all the posters that were yet legible, intimately, and pondering on their ubiquitous nature, I was led into the reflections with which I began this paper, by considering what an awful thing it would it be, ever to have wronged — say M. JULLIEN for example — and to have his avenging name in characters of fire incessantly before my eyes. Or to have injured MADAME TUSSAUD, and undergo a similar retribution. Has any man a self-reproachful thought associated with pills, or ointment? What an avenging spirit to that man is PROFESSOR HOLLOWAY! Have I sinned in oil? CABBURN pursues me. Have I a dark remembrance associated with any gentlemanly garments, bespoke or ready made? MOSES and SON are on my track. Did I ever aim a blow at a defenceless fellow-creature's head? That head eternally being measured for a wig, or that worse head which was bald before it used the balsam, and hirsute afterwards — enforcing the benevolent moral, "Better to

be bald as a Dutch-cheese than come to this," — undoes me. Have I no sore places in my mind which MECHI touches — which NICOLL probes — which no registered article whatever lacerates? Does no discordant note within me thrill responsive to mysterious watchwords, as "Revalenta Arabica," or "Number One St. Paul's Church-yard"? Then may I enjoy life, and be happy.

Lifting up my eyes, as I was musing to this effect, I beheld advancing towards me (I was then on Cornhill near to the Royal Exchange), a solemn procession of three advertising vans, of first-class dimensions, each drawn by a very little horse. As the cavalcade approached, I was at a loss to reconcile the careless deportment of the drivers of these vehicles, with the terrific announcements they conducted through the city, which, being a summary of the contents of a Sunday newspaper, were of the most thrilling kind. Robbery, fire, murder, and the ruin of the united kingdom — each discharged in a line by itself, like a separate broadside of red-hot shot — were among the least of the warnings addressed to an unthinking people. Yet, the Ministers of Fate who drove the awful cars, leaned forward with their arms upon their knees in a state of extreme lassitude, for want of any subject of interest. The first man, whose hair I might naturally have expected to see standing on end, scratched his head — one of the smoothest I ever beheld — with profound indifference. The second whistled. The third yawned.

Pausing to dwell upon this apathy, it appeared to me, as the fatal cars came by me, that I descried in the second car, through the portal in which the charioteer was seated, a figure stretched upon the floor. At the same time, I thought I smelt tobacco. The latter impression

passed quickly from me; the former remained. Curious to know whether this prostrate figure was the one impressible man of the whole capital who had been stricken insensible by the terrors revealed to him, and whose form had been placed in the car by the charioteer, from motives of humanity, I followed the procession. It turned into Leadenhall-market, and halted at a public-house. Each driver dismounted. I then distinctly heard, proceeding from the second car, where I had dimly seen the prostrate form, the words: —

"And a pipe!"

The driver entering the public-house with his fellows, apparently for purposes of refreshment, I could not refrain from mounting on the shaft of the second vehicle, and looking in at the portal. I then beheld, reclining on his back upon the floor, on a kind of mattress or divan, a little man in a shooting-coat. The exclamation "Dear me!" which irresistibly escaped my lips, caused him to sit upright, and survey me. I found him to be a good-looking little man of about fifty, with a shining face, a tight head, a bright eye, a moist wink, a quick speech, and a ready air. He had something of a sporting way with him.

He looked at me, and I looked at him, until the driver displaced me by handing in a pint of beer, a pipe, and what I understand is called "a screw" of tobacco — an object which has the appearance of a curl-paper taken off the barmaid's head, with the curl in it.

"I beg your pardon," said I, when the removed person of the driver again admitted of my presenting my face at the portal. "But — excuse my curiosity, which I inherit from my mother — do you live here?"

"That's good, too!" returned the little man, com-

posedly laying aside a pipe he had smoked out, and filling the pipe just brought to him.

"Oh, you *don't* live here then?" said I.

He shook his head, as he calmly lighted his pipe by means of a German tinder-box, and replied, "This is my carriage. When things are flat, I take a ride sometimes, and enjoy myself. I am the inventor of these wans."

His pipe was now alight. He drank his beer all at once, and he smoked and he smiled at me.

"It was a great idea!" said I.

"Not so bad," returned the little man, with the modesty of merit.

"Might I be permitted to inscribe your name upon the tablets of my memory?" I asked.

"There's not much odds in the name," returned the little man, "— no name particular — I am the King of the Bill-Stickers."

"Good gracious!" said I.

The monarch informed me, with a smile, that he had never been crowned or installed with any public ceremonies, but, that he was peaceably acknowledged as King of the Bill-Stickers in right of being the oldest and most respected member of "the old school of bill-sticking." He likewise gave me to understand that there was a Lord Mayor of the Bill-Stickers, whose genius was chiefly exercised within the limits of the city. He made some allusion, also, to an inferior potentate, called "Turkey-legs;" but, I did not understand that this gentleman was invested with much power. I rather inferred that he derived his title from some peculiarity of gait, and that it was of an honorary character.

"My father," pursued the King of the Bill-Stickers, "was Engineer, Beadle, and Bill-Sticker to the parish

of St. Andrew's, Holborn, in the year one thousand seven hundred and eighty. My father stuck bills at the time of the riots of London."

"You must be acquainted with the whole subject of bill-sticking, from that time to the present!" said I.

"Pretty well so," was the answer.

"Excuse me," said I; "but I am a sort of collector" ——

"Not Income-tax?" cried His Majesty, hastily removing his pipe from his lips.

"No, no," said I.

"Water-rate?" said His Majesty.

"No, no," I returned.

"Gas? Assessed? Sewers?" said His Majesty.

"You misunderstand me," I replied soothingly. "Not that sort of collector at all: a collector of facts."

"Oh! if it's only facts," cried the King of the Bill-Stickers, recovering his good-humor, and banishing the great mistrust that had suddenly fallen upon him, "come in and welcome! If it had been income, or winders, I think I should have pitched you out of the wan, upon my soul!"

Readily complying with the invitation, I squeezed myself in at the small aperture. His Majesty, graciously handing me a little three-legged stool on which I took my seat in a corner, inquired if I smoked.

"I do; — that is, I can," I answered.

"Pipe and a screw!" said His Majesty to the attendant charioteer. "Do you prefer a dry smoke, or do you moisten it?"

As unmitigated tobacco produces most disturbing effects upon my system (indeed, if I had perfect moral courage, I doubt if I should smoke at all, under any cir-

cumstances), I advocated moisture, and begged the Sovereign of the Bill-Stickers to name his usual liquor, and to concede to me the privilege of paying for it. After some delicate reluctance on his part, we were provided, through the instrumentality of the attendant charioteer, with a can of cold rum-and-water, flavored with sugar and lemon. We were also furnished with a tumbler, and I was provided with a pipe. His Majesty, then, observing that we might combine business with conversation, gave the word for the car to proceed; and, to my great delight, we jogged away at a foot pace.

I say to my great delight, because I am very fond of novelty, and it was a new sensation to be jolting through the tumult of the city in that secluded Temple, partly open to the sky, surrounded by the roar without, and seeing nothing but the clouds. Occasionally, blows from whips fell heavily on the Temple's walls, when by stopping up the road longer than usual, we irritated carters and coachmen to madness; but, they fell harmless upon us within and disturbed not the serenity of our peaceful retreat. As I looked upward, I felt, I should imagine, like the Astronomer Royal. I was enchanted by the contrast between the freezing nature of our external mission on the blood of the populace, and the perfect composure reigning within those sacred precincts: where His Majesty, reclining easily on his left arm, smoked his pipe and drank his rum-and-water from his own side of the tumbler, which stood impartially between us. As I looked down from the clouds and caught his royal eye, he understood my reflections. "I have an idea," he observed, with an upward glance, "of training scarlet runners across in the season, — making a arbor of it, — and sometimes taking tea in the same, according to the song."

I nodded approval.

"And here you repose and think?" said I.

"And think," said he, "of posters — walls — and hoardings."

We were both silent, contemplating the vastness of the subject. I remembered a surprising fancy of dear THOMAS HOOD'S, and wondered whether this monarch ever sighed to repair to the great wall of China, and stick bills all over it.

"And so," said he, rousing himself, "it's facts as you collect?"

"Facts," said I.

"The facts of bill-sticking," pursued His Majesty, in a benignant manner, "as known to myself, air as following. When my father was Engineer, Beadle, and Bill-Sticker to the parish of St. Andrew's, Holborn, he employed women to post bills for him. He employed women to post bills at the time of the riots of London. He died at the age of seventy-five year, and was buried by the murdered Eliza Grimwood, over in the Waterloo-road."

As this was somewhat in the nature of a royal speech, I listened with deference and silently. His Majesty, taking a scroll from his pocket, proceeded, with great distinctness, to pour out the following flood of information: —

"'The bills being at that period mostly proclamations and declarations, and which were only a demy size, the manner of posting the bills (as they did not use brushes) was by means of a piece of wood which they called a "dabber." Thus things continued till such time as the State Lottery was passed, and then the printers began to print larger bills, and men were employed instead of

women, as the State Lottery Commissioners then began to send men all over England to post bills, and would keep them out for six or eight months at a time, and they were called by the London bill-stickers "*trampers*," their wages at the time being ten shillings per day, besides expenses. They used sometimes to be stationed in large towns for five or six months together, distributing the schemes to all the houses in the town. And then there were more caricature wood-block engravings for posting-bills than there are at the present time, the principal printers, at that time, of posting-bills being Messrs. Evans and Ruffy, of Budge-row; Thoroughgood and Whiting, of the present day; and Messrs. Gye and Balne, Gracechurch Street, City. The largest bills printed at that period were a two-sheet double crown; and when they commenced printing four-sheet bills, two bill-stickers would work together. They had no settled wages per week, but had a fixed price for their work, and the London bill-stickers, during a lottery week, have been known to earn, each eight or nine pounds per week, till the day of drawing; likewise the men who carried boards in the street used to have one pound per week, and the bill-stickers at that time would not allow any one to wilfully cover or destroy their bills, as they had a society amongst themselves, and very frequently dined together at some public-house where they used to go of an evening to have their work delivered out untoe 'em.'"

All this His Majesty delivered in a gallant manner; posting it, as it were, before me, in a great proclamation. I took advantage of the pause he now made, to inquire what a "two-sheet double crown" might express?

"A two-sheet double crown," replied the King, "is a bill thirty-nine inches wide by thirty inches high."

"Is it possible," said I, my mind reverting to the gigantic admonitions we were then displaying to the multitude — which were as infants to some of the posting-bills on the rotten old warehouse — "that some few years ago the largest bill was no larger than that?"

"The fact," returned the King, "is undoubtedly so." Here he instantly rushed again into the scroll.

"'Since the abolishing of the State Lottery all that good feeling has gone, and nothing but jealousy exists, through the rivalry of each other. Several bill-sticking companies have started, but have failed. The first party that started a company was twelve year ago; but what was left of the old school and their dependants joined together and opposed them. And for some time we were quiet again, till a printer of Hatton Garden formed a company by hiring the sides of houses; but he was not supported by the public, and he left his wooden frames fixed up for rent. The last company that started, took advantage of the New Police Act, and hired of Messrs. Grisell and Peto the hoarding of Trafalgar Square, and established a bill-sticking office in Cursitor-street, Chancery-lane, and engaged some of the new bill-stickers to do their work, and for a time got the half of all our work, and with such spirit did they carry on their opposition towards us, that they used to give us in charge before the magistrate, and get us fined; but they found it so expensive, that they could not keep it up, for they were always employing a lot of ruffians from the Seven Dials to come and fight us; and on one occasion the old bill-stickers went to Trafalgar Square to attempt to post bills, when they were given in custody by the watchman in their employ, and fined at Queen Square five pounds, as they would not allow any of us to speak

in the office; but when they were gone, we had an interview with the magistrate, who mitigated the fine to fifteen shillings. During the time the men were waiting for the fine, this company started off to a public-house that we were in the habit of using, and waited for us coming back, where a fighting-scene took place that beggars description. Shortly after this, the principal one day came and shook hands with us, and acknowledged that he had broken up the company, and that he himself had lost five hundred pound in trying to overthrow us. We then took possession of the hoarding in Trafalgar Square; but Messrs. Grisell and Peto would not allow us to post our bills on the said hoarding without paying them — and from first to last we paid upwards of two hundred pounds for that hoarding, and likewise the hoarding of the Reform Club-house, Pall Mall.'"

His Majesty, being now completely out of breath, laid down his scroll (which he appeared to have finished), puffed at his pipe, and took some rum-and-water. I embraced the opportunity of asking how many divisions the art and mystery of bill-sticking comprised? He replied, three — auctioneers' bill-sticking, theatrical bill-sticking, general bill-sticking.

"The auctioneers' porters," said the King, "who do their bill-sticking, are mostly respectable and intelligent, and generally well paid for their work, whether in town or country. The price paid by the principal auctioneers for country work is nine shillings per day; that is, seven shillings for day's work, one shilling for lodging, and one for paste. Town work is five shillings a day, including paste."

"Town work must be rather hot-work," said I, "if

there be many of those fighting-scenes that beggar description, among the bill-stickers?"

"Well," replied the King, "I a'n't a stranger, I assure you, to black eyes; a bill-sticker ought to know how to handle his fists a bit. As to that row I have mentioned, that grew out of competition, conducted in an uncompromising spirit. Besides a man in a horse-and-shay continually following us about, the company had a watchman on duty, night and day, to prevent us sticking bills upon the hoarding in Trafalgar Square. We went there, early one morning, to stick bills and to black-wash their bills if we were interfered with. We *were* interfered with, and I gave the word for laying on the wash. It *was* laid on — pretty brisk — and we were all taken to Queen Square: but they couldn't fine *me*. *I* knew that," — with a bright smile — "I'd only given directions — I was only the General."

Charmed with this monarch's affability, I inquired if he had ever hired a hoarding himself.

"Hired a large one," he replied, "opposite the Lyceum Theatre, when the buildings was there. Paid thirty pound for it; let out places on it, and called it 'The External Paper-Hanging Station.' But it didn't answer. Ah!" said His Majesty thoughtfully, as he filled the glass, "Bill-stickers have a deal to contend with. The bill-sticking clause was got into the Police Act by a member of parliament that employed me at his election. The clause is pretty stiff respecting where bills go; but *he* didn't mind where *his* bills went. It was all right enough, so long as they was *his* bills!"

Fearful that I observed a shadow of misanthropy on the King's cheerful face, I asked whose ingenious inven-

tion that was, which I greatly admired, of sticking bills under the arches of the bridges.

"Mine!" said His Majesty, "I was the first that ever stuck a bill under a bridge! Imitators soon rose up, of course. — When don't they? But they stuck 'em at low-water, and the tide came and swept the bills clean away. *I* knew that!" The King laughed.

"What may be the name of that instrument, like an immense fishing-rod," I inquired, "with which bills are posted on high places?"

"The joints," returned His Majesty. "Now, we use the joints where formerly we used ladders — as they do still in country places. Once, when Madame" (Vestris, understood) "was playing in Liverpool, another bill-sticker and me were at it together on the wall outside the Clarence Dock — me with the joints — him on a ladder. Lord! I had my bill up, right over his head, yards above him, ladder and all, while he was crawling to his work. The people going in and out of the docks, stood and laughed! — It's about thirty years since the joints come in."

"Are there any bill-stickers who can't read?" I took the liberty of inquiring.

"Some," said the King. "But they know which is the right side up'ards of their work. They keep it as it's given out to 'em. I have seen a bill or so stuck wrong side up'ards. But it's very rare."

Our discourse sustained some interruption at this point, by the procession of cars occasioning a stoppage of about three quarters of a mile in length, as nearly as I could judge. His Majesty, however, entreating me not to be discomposed by the contingent uproar, smoked with great placidity, and surveyed the firmament.

When we were again in motion, I begged to be informed what was the largest poster His Majesty had ever seen. The King replied, "A thirty-six sheet poster." I gathered, also, that there were about a hundred and fifty bill-stickers in London, and that His Majesty considered an average hand equal to the posting of one hundred bills (single sheets) in a day. The King was of opinion, that, although posters had much increased in size, they had not increased in number; as the abolition of the State Lotteries had occasioned a great falling off, especially in the country. Over and above which change, I bethought myself that the custom of advertising in newspapers had greatly increased. The completion of many London improvements, as Trafalgar Square (I particularly observed the singularity of His Majesty's calling *that* an improvement), the Royal Exchange, &c., had of late years reduced the number of advantageous posting-places. Bill-stickers at present rather confine themselves to districts, than to particular descriptions of work. One man would strike over Whitechapel, another would take round Houndsditch, Shoreditch, and the City Road; one (the King said) would stick to the Surrey side; another would make a beat of the West End.

His Majesty remarked, with some approach to severity, on the neglect of delicacy and taste, gradually introduced into the trade by the new school: a profligate and inferior race of impostors who took jobs at almost any price, to the detriment of the old school, and the confusion of their own misguided employers. He considered that the trade was overdone with competition, and observed, speaking of his subjects, "There are too many of 'em." He believed, still, that things were a

little better than they had been; adducing, as a proof, the fact that particular posting-places were now reserved, by common consent, for particular posters; those places, however, must be regularly occupied by those posters, or, they lapsed and fell into other hands. It was of no use giving a man a Drury Lane bill this week and not next. Where was it to go? He was of opinion that going to the expense of putting up your own board on which your sticker could display your own bills, was the only complete way of posting yourself at the present time; but, even to effect this, on payment of a shilling a week to the keepers of steamboat piers and other such places, you must be able, besides, to give orders for theatres and public exhibitions, or you would be sure to be cut out by somebody. His Majesty regarded the passion for orders, as one of the most inappeasable appetites of human nature. If there were a building, or if there were repairs, going on, anywhere, you could generally stand something and make it right with the foreman of the works; but, orders would be expected from you, and the man who could give the most orders was the man who would come off best. There was this other objectionable point, in orders, that workmen sold them for drink, and often sold them to persons who were likewise troubled with the weakness of thirst: which led (His Majesty said) to the presentation of your orders at Theatre doors, by individuals who were "too shakery" to derive intellectual profit from the entertainments, and who brought a scandal on you. Finally, His Majesty said that you could hardly put too little in a poster; what you wanted, was, two or three good catch-lines for the eye to rest on — then, leave it alone — and there you were!

These are the minutes of my conversation with His Majesty, as I noted them down shortly afterwards. I am not aware that I have been betrayed into any alteration or suppression. The manner of the King was frank in the extreme; and he seemed to me to avoid, at once that slight tendency to repetition which may have been observed in the conversation of His Majesty King George the Third, and that slight undercurrent of egotism which the curious observer may perhaps detect in the conversation of Napoleon Bonaparte.

I must do the King the justice to say that it was I, and not he, who closed the dialogue. At this juncture, I became the subject of a remarkable optical delusion; the legs of my stool appeared to me to double up; the car to spin round and round with great violence; and a mist to arise between myself and His Majesty. In addition to these sensations, I felt extremely unwell. I refer these unpleasant effects, either to the paste with which the posters were affixed to the van: which may have contained some small portion of arsenic; or, to the printer's ink, which may have contained some equally deleterious ingredient. Of this, I cannot be sure. I am only sure that I was not affected, either by the smoke, or the rum-and-water. I was assisted out of the vehicle, in a state of mind which I have only experienced in two other places — I allude to the Pier at Dover, and to the corresponding portion of the town of Calais — and sat upon a door-step until I recovered. The procession had then disappeared. I have since looked anxiously for the King in several other cars, but I have not yet had the happiness of seeing His Majesty.

"BIRTHS. MRS. MEEK, OF A SON."

My name is Meek. I am, in fact, Mr. Meek. That son is mine and Mrs. Meek's. When I saw the announcement in the Times, I dropped the paper. I had put it in, myself, and paid for it, but it looked so noble that it overpowered me.

As soon as I could compose my feelings, I took the paper up to Mrs. Meek's bedside. "Maria Jane," said I (I allude to Mrs. Meek), "you are now a public character." We read the review of our child, several times, with feelings of the strongest emotion; and I sent the boy who cleans the boots and shoes, to the office for fifteen copies. No reduction was made on taking that quantity.

It is scarcely necessary for me to say, that our child had been expected. In fact, it had been expected, with comparative confidence, for some months. Mrs. Meek's mother, who resides with us — of the name of Bigby — had made every preparation for its admission to our circle.

I hope and believe I am a quiet man. I will go farther. I *know* I am a quiet man. My constitution is tremulous, my voice was never loud, and, in point of stature, I have been from infancy small. I have the greatest respect for Maria Jane's Mama. She is a most remarkable woman. I honor Maria Jane's Mama.

In my opinion she would storm a town, single-handed, with a hearth-broom, and carry it. I have never known her to yield any point whatever, to mortal man. She is calculated to terrify the stoutest heart.

Still — but I will not anticipate.

The first intimation I had, of any preparations being in progress, on the part of Maria Jane's Mama, was one afternoon, several months ago. I came home earlier than usual from the office, and, proceeding into the dining-room, found an obstruction behind the door, which prevented it from opening freely. It was an obstruction of a soft nature. On looking in, I found it to be a female.

The female in question stood in the corner behind the door, consuming Sherry Wine. From the nutty smell of that beverage pervading the apartment, I have no doubt she was consuming a second glassful. She wore a black bonnet of large dimensions, and was copious in figure. The expression of her countenance was severe and discontented. The words to which she gave utterance on seeing me, were these, "Oh git along with you, Sir, if *you* please; me and Mrs. Bigby don't want no male parties here!"

That female was Mrs. Prodgit.

I immediately withdrew, of course. I was rather hurt, but I made no remark. Whether it was that I showed a lowness of spirits after dinner, in consequence of feeling that I seemed to intrude, I cannot say. But, Maria Jane's Mama said to me on her retiring for the night: in a low distinct voice, and with a look of reproach that completely subdued me: "George Meek, Mrs. Prodgit is your wife's nurse!"

I bear no ill-will toward Mrs. Prodgit. Is it likely

that I, writing this with tears in my eyes, should be capable of deliberate animosity towards a female, so essential to the welfare of Maria Jane? I am willing to admit that Fate may have been to blame, and not Mrs. Prodgit; but, it is undeniably true, that the latter female brought desolation and devastation into my lowly dwelling.

We were happy after her first appearance: we were sometimes exceedingly so. But, whenever the parlor door was opened, and "Mrs. Prodgit!" announced (and she was very often announced), misery ensued. I could not bear Mrs. Prodgit's look. I felt that I was far from wanted, and had no business to exist in Mrs. Prodgit's presence. Between Maria Jane's Mama, and Mrs. Prodgit, there was a dreadful, secret, understanding — a dark mystery and conspiracy, pointing me out as a being to be shunned. I appeared to have done something that was evil. Whenever Mrs. Prodgit called, after dinner, I retired to my dressing-room — where the temperature is very low, indeed, in the wintry time of the year — and sat looking at my frosty breath as it rose before me, and at my rack of boots: a serviceable article of furniture, but never, in my opinion, an exhilarating object. The length of the councils that were held with Mrs. Prodgit, under these circumstances, I will not attempt to describe. I will merely remark, that Mrs. Prodgit always consumed Sherry Wine while the deliberations were in progress; that they always ended in Maria Jane's being in wretched spirits on the sofa; and that Maria Jane's Mama always received me, when I was recalled, with a look of desolate triumph that too plainly said, "*Now*, George Meek! You see my child, Maria Jane, a ruin, and I hope you are satisfied!"

I pass, generally, over the period that intervened between the day when Mrs. Prodgit entered her protest against male parties, and the ever-memorable midnight when I brought her to my unobtrusive home in a cab, with an extremely large box on the roof, and a bundle, a bandbox, and a basket, between the driver's legs. I have no objection to Mrs. Prodgit (aided and abetted by Mrs. Bigby, who I never can forget is the parent of Maria Jane) taking entire possession of my unassuming establishment. In the recesses of my own breast, the thought may linger that a man in possession cannot be so dreadful as a woman, and that woman Mrs. Prodgit; but, I ought to bear a good deal, and I hope I can, and do. Huffing and snubbing, prey upon my feelings; but, I can bear them without complaint. They may tell in the long run; I may be hustled about, from post to pillar, beyond my strength; nevertheless, I wish to avoid giving rise to words in the family.

The voice of Nature, however, cries aloud in behalf of Augustus George, my infant son. It is for him that I wish to utter a few plaintive household words. I am not at all angry; I am mild — but miserable.

I wish to know why, when my child, Augustus George, was expected in our circle, a provision of pins was made, as if the little stranger were a criminal who was to be put to the torture immediately on his arrival, instead of a holy babe? I wish to know why haste was made to stick those pins all over his innocent form, in every direction? I wish to be informed why light and air are excluded from Augustus George, like poisons? Why, I ask, is my unoffending infant so hedged into a basket-bedstead, with dimity and calico, with miniature sheets and blankets, that I can only hear him snuffle (and no

wonder!) deep down under the pink hood of a little bathing-machine, and can never peruse even so much of his lineaments as his nose.

Was I expected to be the father of a French Roll, that the brushes of All Nations were laid in, to rasp Augustus George? Am I to be told that his sensitive skin was ever intended by Nature to have rashes brought out upon it, by the premature and incessant use of those formidable little instruments?

Is my son a Nutmeg, that he is to be grated on the stiff edges of sharp frills? Am I the parent of a Muslin boy, that his yielding surface is to be crimped and small-plaited? Or is my child composed of Paper or of Linen, that impressions of the finer getting-up art, practised by the laundress, are to be printed off, all over his soft arms and legs, as I constantly observe them? The starch enters his soul; who can wonder that he cries?

Was Augustus George intended to have limbs, or to be born a Torso? I presume that limbs were the intention, as they are the usual practice. Then, why are my poor child's limbs fettered and tied up? Am I to be told that there is any analogy between Augustus George Meek and Jack Sheppard?

Analyze Castor Oil at any Institution of Chemistry that may be agreed upon, and inform me what resemblance, in taste, it bears to that natural provision which it is at once the pride and duty of Maria Jane, to administer to Augustus George! Yet, I charge Mrs. Prodgit (aided and abetted by Mrs. Bigby) with systematically forcing Castor Oil on my innocent son, from the first hour of his birth. When that medicine, in its efficient action, causes internal disturbance to Augustus

George, I charge Mrs. Prodgit (aided and abetted by Mrs. Bigby) with insanely and inconsistently administering opium to allay the storm she has raised! What is the meaning of this?

If the days of Egyptian Mummies are past, how dare Mrs. Prodgit require, for the use of my son, an amount of flannel and linen that would carpet my humble roof? Do I wonder that she requires it? No! This morning, within an hour, I beheld this agonizing sight. I beheld my son — Augustus George — in Mrs. Prodgit's hands, and on Mrs. Prodgit's knee, being dressed. He was at the moment, comparatively speaking, in a state of nature; having nothing on, but an extremely short shirt, remarkably disproportionate to the length of his usual outer garments. Trailing from Mrs. Prodgit's lap, on the floor, was a long narrow roller or bandage — I should say of several yards in extent. In this, I SAW Mrs. Prodgit tightly roll the body of my unoffending infant, turning him over and over, now presenting his unconscious face upwards, now the back of his bald head, until the unnatural feat was accomplished, and the bandage secured by a pin, which I have every reason to believe entered the body of my only child. In this tourniquet, he passes the present phase of his existence. Can I know it, and smile!

I fear I have been betrayed into expressing myself warmly, but I feel deeply. Not for myself; for Augustus George. I dare not interfere. Will any one? Will any publication? Any doctor? Any parent? Anybody? I do not complain that Mrs. Prodgit (aided and abetted by Mrs. Bigby) entirely alienates Maria Jane's affections from me, and interposes an impassable barrier between us. I do not complain of being made of no

account. I do not want to be of any account. But, Augustus George is a production of Nature (I cannot think otherwise), and I claim that he should be treated with some remote reference to Nature. In my opinion, Mrs. Prodgit is, from first to last, a convention and a superstition. Are all the faculty afraid of Mrs. Prodgit? If not, why don't they take her in hand and improve her?

P. S. Maria Jane's Mama boasts of her own knowledge of the subject, and says she brought up seven children besides Maria Jane. But how do *I* know that she might not have brought them up much better? Maria Jane herself is far from strong, and is subject to headaches, and nervous indigestion. Besides which, I learn from the statistical tables that one child in five dies within the first year of its life; and one child in three, within the fifth. That don't look as if we could never improve in these particulars, I think!

P. P. S. Augustus George is in convulsions.

THE END.

CAMBRIDGE: PRINTED BY H. O. HOUGHTON.

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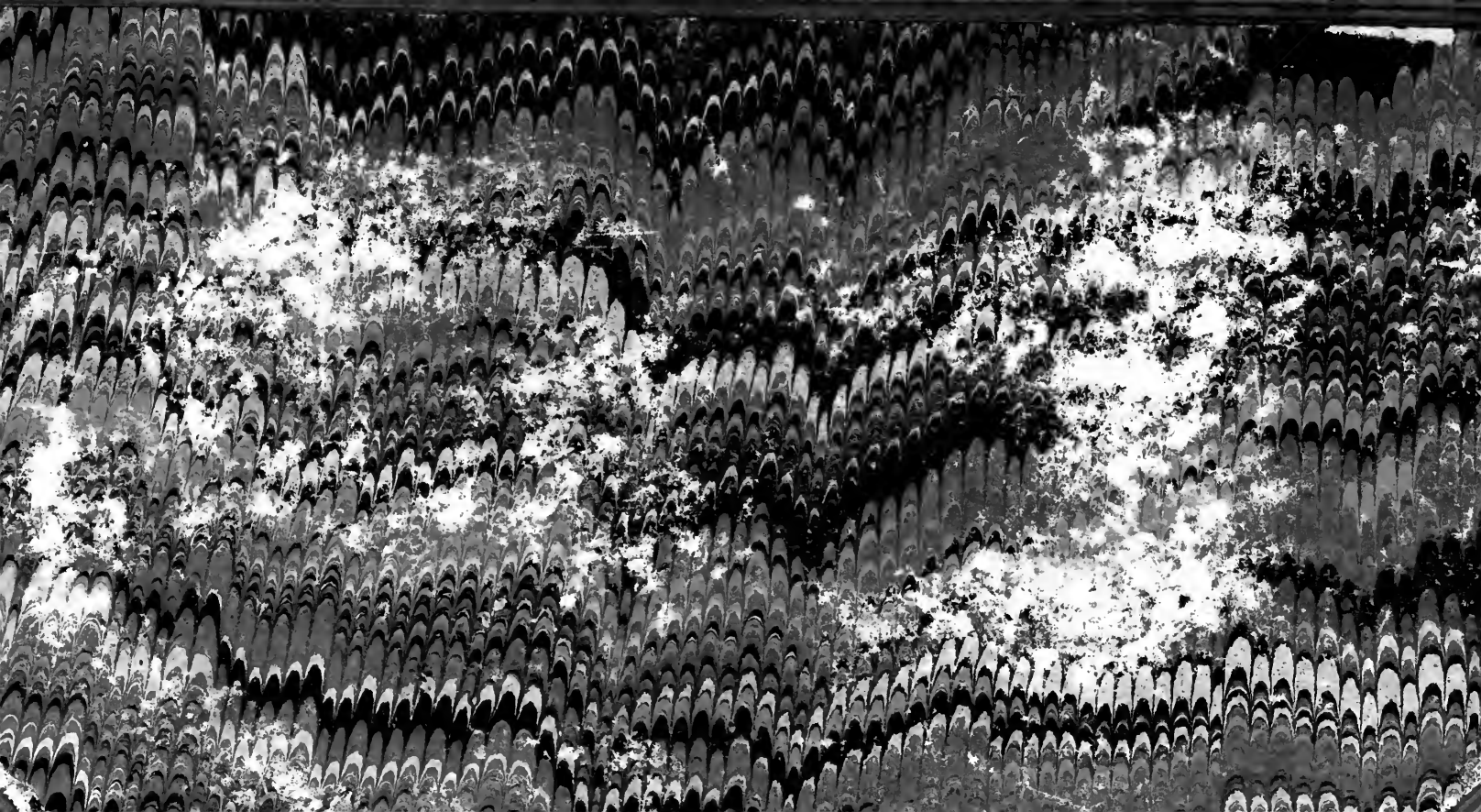
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